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CASTLE RICHMOND.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CASTLE RICHMOND.

A Novel.

By ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF 'BARCHESTER TOWERS,' 'DOCTOR THORNE,' 'THE WEST INDIES AND THE SPANISH MAIN,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1860.

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249. g. 82.

LONDON: PRINTED BY W. CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET

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CASTLE RICHMOND.

CHAPTER I.

PALLIDA MORS.

Mr. Somers, returning from Hap House, gave Owen's message to Herbert Fitzgerald, but at the same time told him that he did not think any good would come of such a meeting.

'I went over there,' he said, 'because I would not willingly omit anything that Mr. Prendergast had suggested; but I did not expect any good to come of it. You know what I have always thought of Owen Fitzgerald.'

'But Mr. Prendergast said that he behaved so well.'

'He did not know Prendergast, and was cowed for the moment by what he had heard. That was natural enough. You do as you like, however; only do not have him over to Castle Richmond.'

Owen, however, did not trust solely to Mr. Somers, but on the following day wrote to Herbert,

suggesting that they had better meet, and begging that the place and time of meeting might be named. He himself again suggested Hap House, and declared that he would be at home on any day and at any hour that his 'cousin' might name, 'only,' as he added, 'the sooner the better.' Herbert wrote back by the same messenger, saying that he would be with him early on the following morning; and on the following morning he drove up to the door of Hap House, while Owen was still sitting with his coffee-pot and knife and fork before him.

Captain Donnellan, whom we saw there on the occasion of our first morning visit, was now gone, and Owen Fitzgerald was all alone in his home. The captain had been an accustomed guest, spending perhaps half his time there during the hunting season; but since Mr. Prendergast had been at Hap House, he had been made to understand that the master would fain be alone. And since that day Owen had never hunted, nor been noticed in his old haunts, nor had been seen talking to his old friends. He had remained at home, sitting over the fire thinking, wandering up and down his own avenue, or standing about the stable, idly, almost unconscious of the grooming of his horses. Once and once only he had been mounted; and then as the dusk of evening was coming on he had trotted over quickly to Desmond Court, as though

he had in hand some purport of great moment; but if so he changed his mind when he came to the gate, for he walked on slowly for three or four hundred yards beyond it, and then turning his horse's head, slowly made his way back past the gate, and then trotted quickly home to Hap House. In these moments of his life he must make or mar himself for life; 'twas so that he felt it; and how should he make himself, or how avoid the marring? That was the question which he now strove to answer.

When Herbert entered the room, he rose from his chair, and walked quickly up to his visitor, with extended hand, and a look of welcome in his face. His manner was very different from that with which he had turned and parted from his cousin, not many days since in the demesne at Castle Richmond. Then he had intended absolutely to defy Herbert Fitzgerald; but there was no spirit of defiance now, either in his hand, or face, or in the tone of his voice.

'I am very glad you have come,' said he. 'I hope you understood that I would have gone to you, only that I thought it might be better for both of us to be here.'

Herbert said something to the effect that he had been quite willing to come over to Hap House. But he was not at the moment so self-possessed as the other, and hardly knew how to begin the subject which was to be discussed between them.

'Of course you know that Mr. Prendergast was here?' said Owen.

'Oh yes,' said Herbert.

'And Mr. Somers also? I tell you fairly, Herbert, that when Mr. Somers came, I was not willing to say much to him. What has to be said must be said between you and me, and not to any third party. I could not open my heart, nor yet speak my thoughts to Mr. Somers.'

In answer to this, Herbert again said that Owen need have no scruple in speaking to him. 'It is all plain sailing; too plain, I fear,' said he. 'There is no doubt whatever now as to the truth of what Mr. Prendergast has told you.'

And then having said so much, Herbert waited for Owen to speak. He, Herbert himself, had little or nothing to say. Castle Richmond with its title and acres was not to be his, but was to be the property of this man with whom he was now sitting. When that was actually and positively understood between them, there was nothing further to be said; nothing as far as Herbert knew. That other sorrow of his, that other and deeper sorrow which affected his mother's name and station,—as to that he did not find himself called on to speak to Owen Fitzgerald. Nor was it necessary that he should say anything as to his great consolation—the consolation which had reached him from Clara Desmond.

'And is it true, Herbert,' asked Owen at last, 'that my uncle is so very ill?' In the time of their kindly intercourse, Owen had always called Sir Thomas his uncle, though latterly he had ceased to do so.

'He is very ill; very ill indeed,' said Herbert. This was a subject in which Owen had certainly a right to feel interested, seeing that his own investiture would follow immediately on the death of Sir Thomas; but Herbert almost felt that the question might as well have been spared. It had been asked, however, almost solely with the view of gaining some few moments.

'Herbert,' he said at last, standing up from his chair, as he made an effort to begin his speech, 'I don't know how far you will believe me when I tell you that all this news has caused me great sorrow. I grieve for your father and your mother, and for you, from the very bottom of my heart.'

'It is very kind of you,' said Herbert. 'But the blow has fallen, and as for myself, I believe that I can bear it. I do not care so very much about the property.'

'Nor do I;' and now Owen spoke rather louder, and with his own look of strong impulse about his mouth and forehead. 'Nor do I care so much about the property. You were welcome to it; and are so still. I have never coveted it from you, and do not covet it.'

'It will be yours now without coveting,' replied Herbert; and then there was another pause, during which Herbert sat still, while Owen stood leaning with his back against the mantelpiece.

'Herbert,' said he, after they had thus remained silent for two or three minutes, 'I have made up my mind on this matter, and I will tell you truly what I do desire, and what I do not. I do not desire your inheritance, but I do desire that Clara Desmond shall be my wife.'

'Owen,' said the other, also getting up, 'I did not expect when I came here that you would have spoken to me about this.'

'It was that we might speak about this that I asked you to come here. But listen to me. When I say that I want Clara Desmond to be my wife, I mean to say that I want that, and that only. It may be true that I am, or shall be, legally the heir to your father's estate. Herbert, I will relinquish all that, because I do not feel it to be my own. I will relinquish it in any way that may separate myself from it most thoroughly. But in return, do you separate yourself from her who was my own before you had ever known her.'

And thus he did make the proposition as to which he had been making up his mind since the morning on which Mr. Prendergast had come to him.

Herbert for a while was struck dumb with

amazement, not so much at the quixotic generosity of the proposal, as at the singular mind of the man in thinking that such a plan could be carried out. Herbert's best quality was no doubt his sturdy common sense, and that was shocked by a suggestion which presumed that all the legalities and ordinary bonds of life could be upset by such an agreement between two young men. He knew that Owen Fitzgerald could not give away his title to an estate of fourteen thousand a year in this off-hand way, and that no one could accept such a gift were it possible to be given. The estate and title must belong to Owen, and could not possibly belong to any one else, merely at his word and fancy. And then again, how could the love of a girl like Clara Fitzgerald be bandied to and fro at the will of any suitor or suitors? That she had once accepted Owen's love, Herbert knew; but since that, in a soberer mood, and with maturer judgment, she had accepted his. How could he give it up to another, or how could that other take possession of it if so abandoned? The bargain was one quite impossible to be carried out; and yet Owen in proposing it had fully intended to be as good as his word.

'That is impossible,' said Herbert in a low voice.

'Why impossible? May I not do what I like with that which is my own? It is not impossible.

I will have nothing to do with that property of yours. In fact, it is not my own, and I will not take it; I will not rob you of that which you have been born to expect. But in return for this——'

'Owen, do not talk of it; would you abandon a girl whom you loved for any wealth, or any property?'

'You cannot love her as I love her. I will talk to you on this matter openly, as I have never yet talked to any one. Since first I saw Clara Desmond, the only wish of my life has been that I might have her for my wife. I have longed for her as a child longs—if you know what I mean by that. When I saw that she was old enough to understand what love meant, I told her what was in my heart, and she accepted my love. She swore to me that she would be mine, let mother or brother say what they would. As sure as you are standing there a living man she loved me with all truth. And that I loved her——! Herbert, I have never loved aught but her; nothing else!—neither man nor woman, nor wealth nor title. All I ask is that I may have that which was my own.'

'But, Owen—' and Herbert touched his cousin's arm.

'Well; why do you not speak? I have spoken plainly enough.'

'It is not easy to speak plainly on all subjects. I would not, if I could avoid it, say a word that would hurt your feelings.'

'Never mind my feelings. Speak out, and let us have the truth, in God's name. My feelings have never been much considered yet—either in this matter or in any other.'

'It seems to me,' said Herbert, 'that the giving of Lady Clara's hand cannot depend on your will, or on mine.'

'You mean her mother.'

'No, by no means. Her mother now would be the last to favour me. I mean herself. If she loves me, as I hope and believe—nay, am sure—'

'She did love me!' shouted Owen.

'But even if so ——. I do not now say anything of that; but even if so, surely you would not have her marry you if she does not love you still? You would not wish her to be your wife if her heart belongs to me?'

'It has been given you at her mother's bidding.'

'However given it is now my own and it cannot be returned. Look here, Owen. I will show you her last two letters, if you will allow me; not in pride, I hope, but that you may truly know what are her wishes.' And he took from his breast, where they had been ever since he received them, the two letters which Clara had written to him. Owen read them both twice over

before he spoke, first one and then the other, and an indescribable look of pain fell on his brow as he did so. They were so tenderly worded, so sweet, so generous! He would have given all the world to have had those letters addressed by her to himself. But even they did not convince him. His heart had never changed, and he could not believe that there had been any change in hers.

'I might have known,' he said, as he gave them back, 'that she would be too noble to abandon you in your distress. As long as you were rich I might have had some chance of getting her back, despite the machinations of her mother. But now that she thinks you are poor—.' And then he stopped, and hid his face between his hands.

And in what he had last said there was undoubtedly something of truth. Clara's love for Herbert had never been passionate, till passion had been created by his misfortune. And in her thoughts of Owen there had been much of regret. Though she had resolved to withdraw her love, she had not wholly ceased to love him. Judgment had bade her to break her word to him, and she had obeyed her judgment. She had admitted to herself that her mother was right in telling her that she could not join her own bankrupt fortunes to the fortunes of one who was both poor and a spendthrift; and thus she had plucked from her heart the picture of the man

she had loved,—or endeavoured so to pluck it. Some love for him, however, had unwittingly lingered there. And then Herbert had come with his suit, a suitor fitted for her in every way. She had not loved him as she had loved Owen. She had never felt that she could worship him, and tremble at the tones of his voice, and watch the glance of his eye, and gaze into his face as though he were half divine. But she acknowledged his worth, and valued him: she knew that it behoved her to choose some suitor as her husband; and now that her dream was gone, where could she choose better than here? And thus Herbert had been accepted. He had been accepted, but the dream was not wholly gone. Owen was in adversity, ill spoken of by those around her, shunned by his own relatives, living darkly, away from all that is soft in life; and for these reasons Clara could not wholly forget her dream. She had, in some sort, unconsciously clung to her old love, till he to whom she had plighted her new troth was in adversity,—and then all was changed. Then her love for Herbert did become a passion; and then, as Owen had become rich, she felt that she could think of him without remorse. He was quite right in perceiving that his chance was gone now that Herbert had ceased to be rich.

'Owen,' said Herbert, and his voice was full

of tenderness, for at this moment he felt that he did love and pity his cousin, 'we must each of us bear the weight which fortune has thrown on us. It may be that we are neither of us to be envied. I have lost all that men generally value, and you—.'

'I have lost all on earth that is valuable to me. But no; it is not lost,—not lost as yet. As long as her name is Clara Desmond, she is as open for me to win as she is for you. And, Herbert, think of it before you make me your enemy. See what I offer you,—not as a bargain, mind you. I give up all my title to your father's property. I will sign any paper that your lawyers may bring to me, which may serve to give you back your inheritance. As for me, I would scorn to take that which belongs in justice to another. I will not have your property. Come what may, I will not have it. I will give it up to you, either as to my enemy or as to my friend.'

'I sincerely hope that we may be friends, but what you say is impossible.'

'It is not impossible. I hereby pledge myself that I will not take an acre of your father's lands; but I pledge myself also that I will always be your enemy if Clara Desmond becomes your wife: and I mean what I say. I have set my heart on one thing, and on one thing only, and if I am ruined in that I am ruined indeed.'

Herbert remained silent, for he had nothing further that he knew how to plead; he felt as other men would feel, that each of them must keep that which Fate had given him. Fate had decreed that Owen should be the heir to Castle Richmond, and the decree thus gone forth must stand valid; and Fate had also decreed that Owen should be rejected by Clara Desmond, which other decree, as Herbert thought, must be held as valid also. But he had no further inclination to argue upon the subject: his cousin was becoming hot and angry; and Herbert was beginning to wish that he was on his way home, that he might be once more at his father's bedside, or in his mother's room, comforting her and being comforted.

'Well,' said Owen, after a while in his deep-toned voice; 'what do you say to my offer?'

'I have nothing further to say: we must each take our own course; as for me, I have lost everything but one thing, and it is not likely that I shall throw that away from me.'

'Nor, so help me Heaven in my need! will I let that thing be filched from me. I have offered you kindness and brotherly love, and wealth, and all that friendship could do for a man; give me my way in this, and I will be to you such a comrade and such a brother.'

'Should I be a man, Owen, were I to give up this?'

'Be a man! Yes! It is pride on your part. You do not love her; you have never loved her as I have loved; you have not sat apart long months and months thinking of her, as I have done. From the time she was a child I marked her as my own. As God will help me when I die, she is all that I have coveted in this world;—all! But her I have coveted with such longings of the heart, that I cannot bring myself to live without her;—nor will I.' And then again they both were silent.

'It may be as well that we should part now,' said Herbert at last. 'I do not know that we can gain anything by further talking on this subject.'

'Well, you know that best; but I have one further question to ask you.'

'What is it, Owen?'

'You still think of marrying Clara Desmond?'

'Certainly; of course I think of it.'

'And when? I presume you are not so chicken-hearted as to be afraid of speaking out openly what you intend to do.'

'I cannot say when; I had hoped that it would have been very soon; but all this will of course delay it. It may be years first.'

These last were the only pleasant words that Owen had heard. If there were to be a delay of years, might not his chance still be as good as Herbert's? But then this delay was to be the conse-

quence of his cousin's ruined prospects—and the accomplishment of that ruin Owen had pledged himself to prevent! Was he by his own deed to enable his enemy to take that very step which he was so firmly resolved to prevent?

'You will give me your promise,' said he, 'that you will not marry her for the next three years? Make me that promise, and I will make you the same?'

Herbert felt that there could be no possibility of his now marrying within the time named, but nevertheless he would not bring himself to make such a promise as this. He would make no bargain about Clara Desmond, about his Clara, which could in any way admit a doubt as to his own right. Had Owen asked him to promise that he would not marry her during the next week he would have given no such pledge. 'No,' said he, 'I cannot promise that.'

'She is now only seventeen.'

'It does not matter. I will make no such promise, because on such a subject you have no right to ask for any. When she will consent to run her risk of happiness in coming to me, then I shall marry her.'

Owen was now walking up and down the room with rapid steps. 'You have not the courage to fight me fairly,' said he.

'I do not wish to fight you at all.'

'It will be yours now without coveting,' replied Herbert; and then there was another pause, during which Herbert sat still, while Owen stood leaning with his back against the mantelpiece.

'Herbert,' said he, after they had thus remained silent for two or three minutes, 'I have made up my mind on this matter, and I will tell you truly what I do desire, and what I do not. I do not desire your inheritance, but I do desire that Clara Desmond shall be my wife.'

'Owen,' said the other, also getting up, 'I did not expect when I came here that you would have spoken to me about this.'

'It was that we might speak about this that I asked you to come here. But listen to me. When I say that I want Clara Desmond to be my wife, I mean to say that I want that, and that only. It may be true that I am, or shall be, legally the heir to your father's estate. Herbert, I will relinquish all that, because I do not feel it to be my own. I will relinquish it in any way that may separate myself from it most thoroughly. But in return, do you separate yourself from her who was my own before you had ever known her.'

And thus he did make the proposition as to which he had been making up his mind since the morning on which Mr. Prendergast had come to him.

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amazement, not so much at the quixotic generosity of the proposal, as at the singular mind of the man in thinking that such a plan could be carried out. Herbert's best quality was no doubt his sturdy common sense, and that was shocked by a suggestion which presumed that all the legalities and ordinary bonds of life could be upset by such an agreement between two young men. He knew that Owen Fitzgerald could not give away his title to an estate of fourteen thousand a year in this off-hand way, and that no one could accept such a gift were it possible to be given. The estate and title must belong to Owen, and could not possibly belong to any one else, merely at his word and fancy. And then again, how could the love of a girl like Clara Fitzgerald be bandied to and fro at the will of any suitor or suitors? That she had once accepted Owen's love, Herbert knew; but since that, in a soberer mood, and with maturer judgment, she had accepted his. How could he give it up to another, or how could that other take possession of it if so abandoned? The bargain was one quite impossible to be carried out; and yet Owen in proposing it had fully intended to be as good as his word.

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to time, and those who had spoken to him had spoken of her as pining for love of him. In this there had been much of the flattery of servants, and something of the subservience of those about him who wished to stand well in his graces. But he had believed it. He was not a conceited man, nor even a vain man. He did not think himself more clever than his cousin; and as for personal appearance, it was a matter to which his thoughts never descended; but he had about him a self-dependence and assurance in his own manhood, which forbade him to doubt the love of one who had told him that she loved him.

And he did not believe in Herbert's love. His cousin was, as he thought, of a calibre too cold for love. That Clara was valued by him, Owen did not doubt—valued for her beauty, for her rank, for her grace and peerless manner; but what had such value as that to do with love? Would Herbert sacrifice everything for Clara Desmond? would he bid Pelion fall on Ossa? would he drink up Esil? All this would Owen do, and more; he would do more than any Laertes had ever dreamed. He would give up for now and for ever all title to those rich lands which made the Fitzgeralds of Castle Richmond the men of greatest mark in all their county.

And thus he fanned himself into a fury as he thought of his cousin's want of generosity. Her-

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and cheeks were red with tears, and her hand, as her brother took it, was cold and numbed.

'What is it, Mary? is he worse?'

'Oh, so much worse. Mamma and Emmeline are there. He has asked for you three or four times, and always says that he is dying. I had better go up and say that you are here.'

'And what does my mother think of it?'

'She has never left him, and therefore I cannot tell; but I know from her face that she thinks that he is—dying. Shall I go up, Herbert?' and so she went, and Herbert, following softly on his toes, stood in the corridor outside the bedroom-door, waiting till his arrival should have been announced. It was but a minute, and then his sister, returning to the door, summoned him to enter.

The room had been nearly darkened, but as there were no curtains to the bed, Herbert could see his mother's face as she knelt on a stool at the bedside. His father was turned away from him, and lay with his hand inside his wife's, and Emmeline was sitting on the foot of the bed, with her face between her hands, striving to stifle her sobs. 'Here is Herbert now, dearest,' said Lady Fitzgerald, with a low, soft voice, almost a whisper, yet clear enough to cause no effort in the hearing. 'I knew that he would not be long.' And Herbert, obeying the signal of his mother's eye, passed round to the other side of the bed.

'Father,' said he, 'are you not so well to-day?'

'My poor boy, my poor ruined boy!' said the dying man, hardly articulating the words as he dropped his wife's hand and took that of his son. Herbert found that it was wet, and clammy, and cold, and almost powerless in its feeble grasp.

'Dearest father, you are wrong if you let that trouble you; all that will never trouble me. Is it not well that a man should earn his own bread? Is it not the lot of all good men?' But still the old man murmured with his broken voice, 'My poor boy, my poor boy!'

The hopes and aspirations of his eldest son are as the breath of his nostrils to an Englishman who has been born to land and fortune. What had not this poor man endured in order that his son might be Sir Herbert Fitzgerald of Castle Richmond? But this was no longer possible; and from the moment that this had been brought home to him, the father had felt that for him there was nothing left but to die. 'My poor boy,' he muttered, 'tell me that you have forgiven me.'

And then they all knelt round the bed and prayed with him; and afterwards they tried to comfort him, telling him how good he had been to them; and his wife whispered in his ear that if there had been fault, the fault was hers, but that her conscience told her that such fault had been forgiven; and while she said this she motioned the

children away from him, and strove to make him understand that human misery could never kill the soul, and should never utterly depress the spirit. 'Dearest love,' she said, still whispering to him in her low, sweet voice—so dear to him, but utterly inaudible beyond—'if you would cease to accuse yourself so bitterly, you might yet be better, and remain with us to comfort us.'

But the slender, half-knit man, whose arms are without muscles and whose back is without pith, will strive in vain to lift the weight which the brawny vigour of another tosses from the ground almost without an effort. It is with the mind and the spirit as with the body; only this, that the muscles of the body can be measured, but not so those of the spirit. Lady Fitzgerald was made of other stuff than Sir Thomas; and that which to her had cost an effort, but with an effort had been done surely, was to him as impossible as the labour of Hercules. 'My poor boy, my poor ruined boy!' he still muttered, as she strove to comfort him.

'Mamma has sent for Mr. Townsend,' Emmeline whispered to her brother, as they stood together in the bow of the window.

'And do you really think he is so bad as that?'

'I am sure that mamma does. I believe he had some sort of a fit before you came. At any rate, he did not speak for two hours.'

'And was not Finucane here?' Finucane was the Mallow doctor.

'Yes; but he had left before papa became so much worse. Mamma has sent for him also.'

But I do not know that it boots to dally longer in a dying chamber. It is an axiom of old that the stage curtain should be drawn before the inexorable one enters in upon his final work. Doctor Finucane did come, but his coming was all in vain. Sir Thomas had known that it was in vain, and so also had his patient wife. There was that mind diseased, towards the cure of which no Doctor Finucane could make any possible approach. And Mr. Townsend came also, let us hope not in vain; though the cure which he fain would have perfected can hardly be effected in such moments as those. Let us hope that it had been already effected. The only crying sin which we can lay to the charge of the dying man is that of which we have spoken; he had endeavoured by pensioning falsehood and fraud to preserve for his wife her name, and for his son that son's inheritance. Even over this, deep as it was, the recording angel may have dropped some cleansing tears of pity.

That night the poor man died, and the Fitzgeralds who sat in the chambers of Castle Richmond were no longer the owners of the mansion. There was no speech of Sir Herbert among the

servants as there would have been had these tidings not have reached them. Dr. Finucane had remained in the house, and even he, in speaking of the son, had shown that he knew the story. They were strangers there now, as they all knew—intruders, as they would soon be considered in the house of their cousin Owen; or rather not their cousin. In that he was above them by right of his blood, they had no right to claim him as their relation.

It may be said that at such a moment all this should not have been thought of; but those who say so know little, as I imagine, of the true effect of sorrow. No wife and no children ever grieved more heartily for a father; but their grief was blacker and more gloomy in that they knew that they were outcasts in the world.

And during that long night as Herbert and his sisters sat up cowering round the fire, he told them of all that had been said at Hap House. 'And can it not be as he says?' Mary had asked.

'And that Herbert should give up his wife!' said Emmeline.

'No; but that other thing.'

'Do not dream of it,' said Herbert. 'It is all, all impossible. The house that we are now in belongs to Sir Owen Fitzgerald.'

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MONTH.

And now I will beg my readers to suppose a month to have passed by since Sir Thomas Fitzgerald died. It was a busy month in Ireland. It may probably be said that so large a sum of money had never been circulated in the country in any one month since money had been known there; and yet it may also be said that so frightful a mortality had never occurred there from the want of that which money brings. It was well understood by all men now that the customary food of the country had disappeared. There was no longer any difference of opinion between rich and poor, between Protestant and Roman Catholic; as to that, no man dared now to say that the poor, if left to themselves, could feed themselves, or to allege that the sufferings of the country arose from the machinations of money-making speculators. The famine was an established fact, and all men knew that it was God's doing,—all men knew this, though few could recognize as yet with how much

mercy God's hand was stretched out over the country.

Or may it not perhaps be truer to say that in such matters there is no such thing as mercy—no special mercies—no other mercy than that fatherly, forbearing, all-seeing, perfect goodness by which the Creator is ever adapting this world to the wants of his creatures, and rectifying the evils arising from their faults and follies? *Sed quo Musa tendis?* Such discourses of the gods as these are not to be fitly handled in such small measures.

At any rate, there was the famine, undoubted now by any one; and death, who in visiting Castle Richmond may be said to have knocked at the towers of a king, was busy enough also among the cabins of the poor. And now the great fault of those who were the most affected was becoming one which would not have been at first sight expected. One would think that starving men would become violent, taking food by open theft—feeling, and perhaps not without some truth, that the agony of their want robbed such robberies of its sin. But such was by no means the case. I only remember one instance in which the bakers' shops were attacked; and in that instance the work was done by those who were undergoing no real suffering. At Clonmel, in Tipperary, the bread was one morning stripped

away from the bakers' shops; but at that time, and in that place, there was nothing approaching to famine. The fault of the people was apathy. It was the feeling of the multitude that the world and all that was good in it was passing away from them; that exertion was useless, and hope hopeless. 'Ah, me! your honour,' said a man to me, 'there'll never be a bit and a sup again in the county Cork! The life of the world is fairly gone!'

And it was very hard to repress this feeling. The energy of a man depends so much on the outward circumstances that encumber him! It is so hard to work when work seems hopeless—so hard to trust where the basis of our faith is so far removed from sight! When large tracts of land went out of cultivation, was it not natural to think that agriculture was receding from the country, leaving the green hills once more to be brown and barren, as hills once green have become in other countries? And when men were falling in the highways, and women would sit with their babes in their arms, listless till death should come to them, was it not natural to think that death was making a huge success—that he, the inexorable one, was now the inexorable indeed?

There were greatly trusting hearts that could withstand the weight of this terrible pressure, and thinking minds which saw that good would come

out of this great evil; but such hearts and such minds were not to be looked for among the suffering poor; and were not, perhaps, often found even among those who were not poor or suffering. It was very hard to be thus trusting and thoughtful while everything around was full of awe and agony.

The people, however, were conscious of God's work, and were becoming dull and apathetic. They clustered about the roads, working lazily while their strength lasted them; and afterwards, when strength failed them for this, they clustered more largely in the poor-houses. And in every town—in every assemblage of houses which in England would be called a village, there was a poor-house. Any big barrack of a tenement that could be obtained at a moment's notice, whatever the rent, became a poor-house in the course of twelve hours;—in twelve, nay, in two hours. What was necessary but the bare walls, and a supply of yellow meal? Bad provision this for all a man's wants,—as was said often enough by irrational philanthropists; but better provision than no shelter and no yellow meal! It was bad that men should be locked up at night without any of the appliances of decency; bad that they should be herded together for day after day with no resource but the eating twice a day of enough unsavoury food to keep life and soul together;—very bad, ye philanthropical irrationalists! But

is not a choice of evils all that is left to us in many a contingency? Was not even this better than that life and soul should be allowed to part, without any effort at preserving their union?

And thus life and soul were kept together, the government of the day having wisely seen what, at so short a notice, was possible for them to do, and what was absolutely impossible. It is in such emergencies as these that the watching and the wisdom of a government are necessary; and I shall always think—as I did think then—that the wisdom of its action and the wisdom of its abstinence from action were very good. And now again the fields in Ireland are green, and the markets are busy, and money is chucked to and fro like a weathercock which the players do not wish to have abiding with them; and the tardy speculator going over to look for a bit of land comes back muttering angrily that fancy prices are demanded. 'They'll run you up to thirty-three years' purchase,' says the tardy speculator, thinking, as it seems, that he is specially ill used. Agricultural wages have been nearly doubled in Ireland during the last fifteen years. Think of that, Master Brook. Work for which, at six shillings a week, there would be a hundred hungry claimants in 1845, —in the good old days before the famine, when repeal was so immediately expected—will now fetch ten shillings, the claimants being by no means nume-

rous. In 1843 and 1844, I knew men to work for fourpence a day—something over the dole on which we are told, being mostly incredulous as we hear it, that a Coolie labourer can feed himself with rice in India;—not one man or two men, the broken down incapables of the parish, but the best labour of the country. One and twopence is now about the cheapest rate at which a man can be hired for agricultural purposes. While this is so, and while the prices are progressing, there is no cause for fear, let Bishops A and B, and Archbishops C and D fret and fume with never so great vexation touching the clipped honours of their father the Pope.

But again; Quo Musa tendis? I could write on this subject for a week were it not that Rhadamanthus awaits me, Rhadamanthus the critic; and Rhadamanthus is, of all things, impatient of an episode.

Life and soul were kept together in those terrible days;—that is, the Irish life and soul generally. There were many slips, in which the union was violently dissolved,—many cases in which the yellow meal allowed was not sufficient, or in which it did not reach the sufferer in time to prevent such dissolution,—cases which when numbered together amounted to thousands. And then the pestilence came, taking its victims by tens

of thousands,—but that was after the time with which we shall have concern here; and immigration followed, taking those who were saved by hundreds of thousands. But the millions are still there, a thriving people; for His mercy endureth for ever.

During this month, the month ensuing upon the death of Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, Herbert could of course pay no outward attention to the wants or relief of the people. He could make no offer of assistance, for nothing belonged to him; nor could he aid in the councils of the committees, for no one could have defined the position of the speaker. And during that month nothing was defined about Castle Richmond. Lady Fitzgerald was still always called by her title. The people of the country, including the tradesmen of the neighbouring towns, addressed the owner of Hap House as Sir Owen; and gradually the name was working itself into common use, though he had taken no steps to make himself legally entitled to wear it. But no one spoke of Sir Herbert. The story was so generally known, that none were so ignorant as to suppose him to be his father's heir. The servants about the place still called him Mr. Herbert, orders to that effect having been specially given; and the peasants of the country, with that tact which graces them, and with that anxiety to abstain from giving pain which always accompanies them unless when

angered, carefully called him by no name. They knew that he was not Sir Herbert; but they would not believe but what, perchance, he might be so yet on some future day. So they took off their old hats to him, and passed him silently in his sorrow; or if they spoke to him, addressed his honour simply, omitting all mention of that Christian name, which the poor Irishman is generally so fond of using. 'Mister Blake' sounds cold and unkindly in his ears. It is the 'Masther,' or 'His honour,' or if possible 'Misther Thady.' Or if there be any handle, that is used with avidity Pat is a happy man when he can address his landlord as 'Sir Patrick.'

But now the 'ould masther's son' could be called by no name. Men knew not what he was to be, though they knew well that he was not that which he ought to be. And there were some who attempted to worship Owen as the rising sun; but for such of them as had never worshipped him before that game was rather hopeless. In those days he was not much seen, neither hunting nor entertaining company; but when seen he was rough enough with those who made any deep attempt to ingratiate themselves with his coming mightiness. And during this month he went over to London, having been specially invited so to do by Mr. Prendergast: but very little came of his visit there, except that it was certified to

him that he was beyond all doubt the baronet. 'And there shall be no unnecessary delay, Sir Owen,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'in putting you into full possession of all your rights.' In answer to which Owen had replied that he was not anxious to be put in possession of any rights. That as far as any active doing of his own was concerned, the title might lie in abeyance, and that regarding the property he would make known his wish to Mr. Prendergast very quickly after his return to Ireland. But he intimated at the same time that there could be no ground for disturbing Lady Fitzgerald, as he had no intention under any circumstances of living at Castle Richmond.

'Had you not better tell Lady Fitzgerald that yourself?' said Mr. Prendergast, catching at the idea that his friend's widow—my readers will allow me so to call her—might be allowed to live undisturbed at the family mansion, if not for life, at any rate for a few years. If this young man were so generous, why should it not be so? He would not want the big house, at any rate, till he were married.

'It would be better that you should say so,' said Owen. 'I have particular reasons for not wishing to go there.'

'But allow me to say, my dear young friend—and I hope I may call you so, for I greatly admire the way in which you have taken all these

tidings—that I would venture to advise you to drop the remembrance of any unpleasantness that may have existed. You should now feel yourself to be the closest friend of that family.'

'So I would if——,' and then Owen stopped short, though Mr. Prendergast gave him plenty of time to finish his sentence were he minded to do so.

'In your present position,' continued the lawyer, 'your influence will be very great.'

'I can't explain it all,' said Owen; 'but I don't think my influence will be great at all. And what is more, I do not want any influence of that sort. I wish Lady Fitzgerald to understand that she is at perfect liberty to stay where she is,—as far as I am concerned. Not as a favour from me, mind; for I do not think that she would take a favour from my hands.'

'But, my dear sir!'

'Therefore you had better write to her about remaining there.'

Mr. Prendergast did write to her, or rather to Herbert: but in doing so he thought it right to say that the permission to live at Castle Richmond should be regarded as a kindness granted them by their relative. 'It is a kindness which, under the circumstances, your mother may, I think, accept without compunction; at any rate, for some time to come,—till she shall have suited herself

without hurrying her choice; but, nevertheless, it must be regarded as a generous offer on his part; and I do hope, my dear Herbert, that you and he will be fast friends.'

But Mr. Prendergast did not in the least comprehend the workings of Owen's mind; and Herbert, who knew more of them than any one else, did not understand them altogether. Owen had no idea of granting any favour to his relatives, who, as he thought, had never granted any to him. What Owen wanted,—or what he told himself that he wanted,—was justice. It was his duty as a just man to abstain from taking hold of those acres, and he was prepared to do his duty. But it was equally Herbert's duty as a just man to abstain from taking hold of Clara Desmond, and he was resolved that he would never be Herbert's friend if Herbert did not perform that duty. And then, though he felt himself bound to give up the acres,—though he did regard this as an imperative duty, he nevertheless felt also that something was due to him for his readiness to perform such a duty,—that some reward should be conceded to him; what this reward was to be, or rather what he wished it to be, we all know.

Herbert had utterly refused to engage in any such negotiation; but Owen, nevertheless, would not cease to think that something might yet be done. Who was so generous as Clara, and would not Clara

herself speak out if she knew how much her old lover was prepared to do for this newer lover? Half a dozen times Owen made up his mind to explain the whole thing to Mr. Prendergast; but when he found himself in the presence of the lawyer, he could not talk about love. Young men are so apt to think that their seniors in age cannot understand romance, or acknowledge the force of a passion. But here they are wrong, for there would be as much romance after forty as before, I take it, were it not checked by the fear of ridicule. So Owen stayed a week in London, seeing Mr. Prendergast every day; and then he returned to Hap House.

In the mean time life went on at a very sad pace at Desmond Court. There was no concord whatever between the two ladies residing there. The mother was silent, gloomy, and sometimes bitter, seldom saying a word about Herbert Fitzgerald or his prospects, but saying that word with great fixity of purpose when it was spoken. 'No one,' she said, 'should attribute to her the poverty and misery of her child. That marriage should not take place from her house, or with her consent.' And Clara for the most part was silent also. In answer to such words as the above she would say nothing; but when, as did happen once or twice, she was forced to speak, she declared openly enough that no earthly

consideration should induce her to give up her engagement.

And then the young earl came home, brought away from his school in order that his authority might have effect on his sister. To speak the truth, he was unwilling enough to interfere, and would have declined to come at all could he have dared to do so. Eton was now more pleasant to him than Desmond Court, which, indeed, had but little of pleasantness to offer to a lad such as he was now. He was sixteen, and manly for his age; but the question in dispute at Desmond Court offered little attraction even to a manly boy of sixteen. In that former question as to Owen he had said a word or two, knowing that Owen could not be looked upon as a fitting husband for his sister; but now he knew not how to counsel her again as to Herbert, seeing that it was but the other day that he had written a long letter, congratulating her on that connection.

Towards the end of the month, however, he did arrive, making glad his mother's heart as she looked at his strong limbs and his handsome open face. And Clara, too, threw herself so warmly into his arms that he did feel glad that he had come to her. 'Oh, Patrick, it is so sweet to have you here!' she said, before his mother had had time to speak to him.

'Dearest Clara!'

'But, Patrick, you must not be cruel to me. Look here, Patrick; you are my only brother, and I so love you that I would not offend you or turn you against me for worlds. You are the head of our family, too, and nothing should be done that you do not like. But if so much depends on you, you must think well before you decide on anything.'

He opened his young eyes and looked intently into her face, for there was an earnestness in her words that almost frightened him. 'You must think well of it all before you speak, Patrick; and remember this, you and I must be honest and honourable, whether we be poor or no. You remember about Owen Fitzgerald, how I gave way then because I could do so without dishonour. But now—'

'But, Clara, I do not understand it all as yet.'

'No; you cannot,—not as yet—and I will let mamma tell you the story. All I ask is this, that you will think of my honour before you say a word that can favour either her or me.' And then he promised her that he would do so; and his mother, when on the following morning she told him all the history, found him reserved and silent.

'Look at his position,' said the mother, pleading her cause before her son. 'He is illegitimate, and—'

'Yes, but mother—'

'I know all that, my dear; I know what you would say; and no one can pity Mr. Fitzgerald's position more than I do; but you would not on that account have your sister ruined. It is romance on her part.'

'But what does he say?'

'He is quite willing to give up the match. He has told me so, and said as much to his aunt, whom I have seen three times on the subject.'

'Do you mean that he wishes to give it up?'

'No,—at least I don't know. If he does, he cannot express such a wish, because Clara is so headstrong. Patrick, in my heart I do not believe that she cares for him. I have doubted it for some time.'

'But you wanted her to marry him.'

'So I did. It was an excellent match, and in a certain way she did like him; and then, you know, there was that great danger about poor Owen. It was a great danger then. But now she is so determined about this, because she thinks it would be ungenerous to go back from her word; and in this way she will ruin the very man she wishes to serve. Of course he cannot break off the match if she persists in it. What I want you to perceive is this, that he, utterly penniless as he is, will have to begin the world with a clog round his neck, because she is so obstinate. What could possibly be worse for him than a titled wife without a penny?' And

in this way the countess pleaded her side of the question before her son.

It was quite true that she had been three times to Castle Richmond, and had thrice driven Aunt Letty into a state bordering on distraction. If she could only get the Castle Richmond people to take it up as they ought to do! It was thus she argued with herself,—and with Aunt Letty also, endeavouring to persuade her that these two young people would undoubtedly ruin each other, unless those who were really wise and prudent, and who understood the world—such as Aunt Letty, for instance—would interfere to prevent it.

Aunt Letty on the whole did agree with her, though she greatly disliked her. Miss Fitzgerald had strongly planted within her bosom the prudent old-world notion, that young gentlefolks should not love each other unless they have plenty of money; and that, if unfortunately such did love each other, it was better that they should suffer all the pangs of hopeless love than marry and trust to God and their wits for bread and cheese. To which opinion of Aunt Letty's, as well as to some others entertained by that lady with much pertinacity, I cannot subscribe myself as an adherent.

Lady Desmond had wit enough to discover that Aunt Letty did agree with her in the main, and on this account she was eager in seeking her assistance. Lady Fitzgerald of course could not be

seen, and there was no one else at Castle Richmond who could be supposed to have any weight with Herbert. And therefore Lady Desmond was very eloquent with Aunt Letty, talking much of the future miseries of the two young people, till the old lady had promised to use her best efforts in enlisting Lady Fitzgerald on the same side. 'You cannot wonder, Miss Fitzgerald, that I should wish to put an end to the cruel position in which my poor girl is placed. You know how much a girl suffers from that kind of thing.'

Aunt Letty did dislike Lady Desmond very much; but, nevertheless, she could not deny the truth of all this; and therefore it may be said that the visits of the countess to Castle Richmond were on the whole successful.

And the month wore itself away also in that sad household, and the Fitzgeralds were gradually becoming used to their position. Family discussions were held among them as to what they should do, and where they should live in future. Mr. Prendergast had written, seeing that Owen had persisted in refusing to make the offer personally himself—saying that there was no hurry for any removal. 'Sir Owen,' he said,—having considered deeply whether or no he would call him by the title or no, and having resolved that it would be best to do so at once—'Sir Owen was inclined to behave very generously. Lady Fitz-

gerald could have the house and demesne at any rate for twelve months, and by that time the personal property left by Sir Thomas would be realized, and there would be enough,' Mr. Prendergast said, 'for the three ladies to live "in decent quiet comfort."' Mr. Prendergast had taken care before he left Castle Richmond that a will should be made and duly executed by Sir Thomas, leaving what money he had to his three children by name, —in trust for their mother's use. Till the girls should be of age that trust would be vested in Herbert.

'Decent quiet comfort!' said Mary to her brother and sister as they conned the letter over; 'how comfortless it sounds!'

And so the first month after the death of Sir Thomas passed by, and the misfortunes of the Fitzgerald family ceased to be the only subject spoken of by the inhabitants of county Cork.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR GOING.

At the end of the month, Herbert began to prepare himself for facing the world. The first question to be answered, was that one which is so frequently asked in most families, but which had never yet been necessary in this—What profession would he follow? All manners of ways by which an educated man can earn his bread had been turned over in his mind, and in the minds of those who loved him, beginning with the revenues of the Archbishop of Armagh, which was Aunt Letty's idea, and ending with a seat at a government desk, which was his own. Mr. Prendergast had counselled the law; not his own lower branch of the profession, but a barrister's full-blown wig, adding, in his letter to Lady Fitzgerald, that if Herbert would come to London, and settle in chambers, he, Mr. Prendergast, would see that his life was made agreeable to him. But Mr. Somers gave other advice. In those days Assistant Poor-Law Commissioners were being appointed in

Ireland, almost by the score, and Mr. Somers declared that Herbert had only to signify his wish for such a position, and he would get it. The interest which he had taken in the welfare of the poor around him was well known, and as his own story was well known also, there could be no doubt that the government would be willing to assist one so circumstanced, and who when assisted would make himself so useful. Such was the advice of Mr. Somers; and he might have been right but for this, that both Herbert and Lady Fitzgerald felt that it would be well for them to move out of that neighbourhood,—out of Ireland altogether, if such could be possible.

Aunt Letty was strong for the Church. A young man who had distinguished himself at the University so signally as her nephew had done, taking his degree at the very first attempt, and that in so high a class of honour as the fourth, would not fail to succeed in the Church. He might not perhaps succeed as to Armagh; that she admitted, but there were some thirty other bishoprics to be had, and it would be odd if, with his talents, he did not get one of them. Think what it would be if he were to return to his own country as Bishop of Cork, Cloyne, and Ross, as to which amalgamation of sees, however, Aunt Letty had her own ideas. He was slightly tainted with the venom of Puseyism, Aunt Letty said to her-

self; but nothing would dispel this with so much certainty as the theological studies necessary for ordination. And then Aunt Letty talked it over by the hour together with Mrs. Townsend, and both those ladies were agreed that Herbert should get himself ordained as quickly as possible;—not in England, where there might be danger even in ordination, but in good, wholesome, Protestant Ireland, where a Church of England clergyman was a clergyman of the Church of England, and not a priest, slipping about in the mud half way between England and Rome.

Herbert himself was anxious to get some employment by which he might immediately earn his bread, but not unnaturally wished that London should be the scene of his work. Anywhere in Ireland he would be known as the Fitzgerald who ought to have been Fitzgerald of Castle Richmond. And then too, he, as other young men, had an undefined idea, that as he must earn his bread London should be his ground. He had at first been not ill inclined to that Church project, and had thus given a sort of ground on which Aunt Letty was able to stand,—had, as it were, given her some authority for carrying on an agitation in furtherance of her own views; but Herbert himself soon gave up this idea. A man, he thought, to be a clergyman should have a very strong predilection in favour of that profession; and so he gradually abandoned that idea,—

actuated, as poor Aunt Letty feared, by the agency of the evil one, working through the means of Puseyism.

His mother and sisters were in favour of Mr. Prendergast's views, and as it was gradually found by them all that there would not be any immediate pressure as regarded pecuniary means, that seemed at last to be their decision. Herbert would remain yet for three or four weeks at Castle Richmond, till matters there were somewhat more thoroughly settled, and would then put himself into the hands of Mr. Prendergast in London. Mr. Prendergast would select a legal tutor for him, and proper legal chambers; and then not long afterwards his mother and sisters should follow, and they would live together at some small villa residence near St. John's Wood Road, or perhaps out at Brompton.

It is astonishing how quickly in this world of ours chaos will settle itself into decent and graceful order, when it is properly looked in the face, and handled with a steady hand which is not sparing of the broom. Some three months since, everything at Castle Richmond was ruin; such ruin, indeed, that the very power of living under it seemed to be doubtful. When first Mr. Prendergast arrived there, a feeling came upon them all as though they might hardly dare to live in a world which would look at them as so thoroughly degraded. As regards

means, they would be beggars! and as regards position, so much worse than beggars! A broken world was in truth falling about their ears, and it was felt to be impossible that they should endure its convulsions and yet live.

But now the world had fallen, the ruin had come, and they were already strong in future hopes. They had dared to look at their chaos, and found that it still contained the elements of order. There was much still that marred their happiness, and forbade the joyousness of other days. Their poor father had gone from them in their misery, and the house was still a house of mourning; and their mother too, though she bore up so wonderfully against her fate, and for their sakes hoped and planned and listened to their wishes, was a stricken woman. That she would never smile again with any heartfelt joy they were all sure. But, nevertheless, their chaos was conquered, and there was hope that the fields of life would again show themselves green and fruitful.

On one subject their mother never spoke to them, nor had even Herbert dared to speak to her: not a word had been said in that house since Mr. Prendergast left it as to the future whereabouts or future doings of that man to whom she had once given her hand at the altar. But she had ventured to ask by letter a question of Mr. Prendergast. Her question had been this: What must I do that he

may not come to me or to my children? In answer to this Mr. Prendergast had told her, after some delay, that he believed she need fear nothing. He had seen the man, and he thought that he might assure her that she would not be troubled in that respect.

'It is possible,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'that he may apply to you by letter for money. If so, give him no answer whatever, but send his letters to me.'

'And are you all going?' asked Mrs. Townsend of Aunt Letty, with a lachrymose voice soon after the fate of the family was decided. They were sitting together with their knees over the fire in Mrs. Townsend's dining-parlour, in which the perilous state of the country had been discussed by them for many a pleasant hour together.

'Well, I think we shall; you see, my sister would never be happy here.'

'No, no; the shock and the change would be too great for her. Poor Lady Fitzgerald! And when is that man coming into the house?'

'What, Owen?'

'Yes! Sir Owen I suppose he is now.'

'Well, I don't know; he does not seem to be in any hurry. I believe that he has said that my sister may continue to live there if she pleases. But of course she cannot do that.'

'They do say about the country,' whispered

Mrs. Townsend, 'that he refuses to be the heir at all. He certainly has not had any cards printed with the title on them—I know that as a fact.'

'He is a very singular man, very. You know I never could bear him,' said Aunt Letty.

'No, nor I either. He has not been to our church once these six months. But it's very odd, isn't it? Of course you know the story?'

'What story?' asked Aunt Letty.

'About Lady Clara. Owen Fitzgerald was dreadfully in love with her before your Herbert had ever seen her. And they do say that he has sworn his cousin shall never live if he marries her.'

'They can never marry now, you know. Only think of it. There would be three hundred a year between them.—Not at present, that is,' added Aunt Letty, looking forward to a future period after her own death.

'That is very little, very little indeed,' said Mrs. Townsend, remembering, however, that she herself had married on less. 'But, Miss Fitzgerald, if Herbert does not marry her do you think this Owen will?'

'I don't think she'd have him. I am quite sure she would not.'

'Not when he has all the property, and the title too?'

'No, nor double as much. What would people

say of her if she did? But, however, there is no fear, for she declares that nothing shall induce her to give up her engagement with our Herbert.'

And so they discussed it backward and forward in every way, each having her own theory as to that singular rumour which was going about the country, signifying that Owen had declined to accept the title. Aunt Letty, however, would not believe that any good could come from so polluted a source, and declared that he had his own reasons for the delay. 'It's not for any love of us,' she said, 'if he refuses to take either that or the estate.' And in this she was right. But she would have been more surprised still had she learned that Owen's forbearance arose from a strong anxiety to do what was just in the matter.

'And so Herbert won't go into the Church?'

And Letty shook her head sorrowing.

'Æneas would have been so glad to have taken him for a twelvemonth's reading,' said Mrs. Townsend. 'He could have come here, you know, when you went away, and been ordained at Cork, and got a curacy close in the neighbourhood, where he was known. It would have been so nice; wouldn't it?'

Aunt Letty would not exactly have advised the scheme as suggested by Mrs. Townsend. Her ideas as to Herbert's clerical studies would have been higher than this. Trinity College, Dublin,

was in her estimation the only place left for good Church of England ecclesiastical teaching. But as Herbert was obstinately bent on declining sacerdotal life, there was no use in dispelling Mrs. Townsend's bright vision.

'It's all of no use,' she said; 'he is determined to go to the bar.'

'The bar is very respectable,' said Mrs. Townsend, kindly.

'And you mean to go with them, too?' said Mrs. Townsend, after another pause. 'You'll hardly be happy, I'm thinking, so far away from your old home.'

'It is sad to change at my time of life,' said Aunt Letty, plaintively. 'I'm sixty-two now.'

'Nonsense,' said Mrs. Townsend, who, however, knew her age to a day.

'Sixty-two if I live another week, and I have never yet had any home but Castle Richmond. There I was born, and till the other day I had every reason to trust that there I might die.' But what does it matter?'

'No, that's true of course; what does it matter where we are while we linger in this vale of tears? But couldn't you get a little place for yourself somewhere near here? There's Callaghan's cottage, with the two-acre piece for a cow, and as nice a spot of a garden as there is in the county Cork.'

'I wouldn't separate myself from her now,' said Aunt Letty, 'for all the cottages and all the gardens in Ireland. The Lord has been pleased to throw us together, and together we will finish our pilgrimage. Whither she goes, I will go, and where she lodges, I will lodge; her people shall be my people, and her God my God.' And then Mrs. Townsend said nothing further of Callaghan's pretty cottage, or of the two-acre piece.

But one reason for her going Aunt Letty did not give, even to her friend Mrs. Townsend. Her income, that which belonged exclusively to herself, was in no way affected by these sad Castle Richmond revolutions. This was a comfortable,—we may say a generous provision for an old maiden lady, amounting to some six hundred a year, settled upon her for life, and this, if added to what could be saved and scraped together, would enable them to live comfortably as far as means were concerned, in that suburban villa to which they were looking forward. But without Aunt Letty's income that suburban villa must be but a poor home. Mr. Prendergast had calculated that some fourteen thousand pounds would represent the remaining property of the family, with which it would be necessary to purchase government stock. Such being the case, Aunt Letty's income was very material to them.

'I trust you will be able to find some one there

who will preach the gospel to you,' said Mrs. Townsend, in a tone that showed how serious were her misgivings on the subject.

'I will search for such a one at any rate,' said Aunt Letty. 'You need not be afraid that I shall be a backslider.'

'But they have crosses now over the communion tables in the churches in England,' said Mrs. Townsend.

'I know it is very bad,' said Aunt Letty. 'But there will always be a remnant left. The Lord will not utterly desert us.' And then she took her departure, leaving Mrs. Townsend with the conviction that the land to which her friend was going was one in which the light of the gospel no longer shone in its purity.

It was not wonderful that they should all be anxious to get away from Castle Richmond, for the house there was now not a pleasant one in which to live. Let all those who have houses and the adjuncts of houses think how considerable a part of their life's pleasures consists in their interest in the things around them. When will the sea-kale be fit to cut, and when will the crocuses come up? will the violets be sweeter than ever? and the geranium cuttings, are they thriving? we have dug, and manured, and sown, and we look forward to the reaping, and to see our garners full. The very furniture which ministers to our daily uses is

loved and petted; and in decorating our rooms we educate ourselves in design. The place in church which has been our own for years,—is not that dear to us, and the voice that has told us of God's tidings—even though the drone become more evident as it waxes in years, and though it grows feeble and indolent? And the faces of those who have lived around us, do we not love them too, the servants who have worked for us, and the children who have first toddled beneath our eyes and prattled in our ears, and now run their strong races, screaming loudly, splashing us as they pass —very unpleasantly? Do we not love them all? Do they not all contribute to the great sum of our enjoyment? All men love such things, more or less, even though they know it not. And women love them even more than men.

And the Fitzgeralds were about to leave them all. The early buds of spring were now showing themselves, but how was it possible that they should look to them? One loves the bud because one expects the flower. The sea-kale now was beyond their notice, and though they plucked the crocuses, they did so with tears upon their cheeks. After much consideration the church had been abandoned by all except Aunt Letty and Herbert. That Lady Fitzgerald should go there was impossible, and the girls were only too glad to be allowed to stay with their mother. And the schools in which

they had taught since the first day in which teaching had been possible for them, had to be abandoned with such true pangs of heartfelt sorrow.

From the time when their misery first came upon them, from the days when it first began to be understood that the world had gone wrong at Castle Richmond, this separation from the schools had commenced. The work had been dropped for a while, but the dropping had in fact been final, and there was nothing further to be done than the saddest of all leavetaking. The girls had sent word to the children, perhaps imprudently, that they would go down and say a word of adieu to their pupils. The children had of course told their mothers, and when the girls reached the two neat buildings which stood at the corner of the park, there were there to meet them, not unnaturally, a concourse of women and children.

In former prosperous days the people about Castle Richmond had, as a rule, been better to do that their neighbours. Money wages had been more plentiful, and there had been little or no subletting of land; the children had been somewhat more neatly clothed, and the women less haggard in their faces; but this difference was hardly perceptible any longer. To them, the Miss Fitzgeralds, looking at the poverty-stricken assemblage, it almost seemed as though the misfortune of their house had brought down its immediate conse-

quences on all who had lived within their circle but this was the work of the famine. In those days one could rarely see any member of a peasant's family bearing in his face a look of health. The yellow meal was a useful food—the most useful, doubtless, which could at that time be found; but it was not one that was gratifying either to the eye or palate.

The girls had almost regretted their offer before they had left the house. It would have been better, they said to themselves, to have had the children up in the hall, and there to have spoken their farewells, and made their little presents. The very entering those schoolrooms again would almost be too much for them; but this consideration was now too late, and when they got to the corner of the gate, they found that there was a crowd to receive them. 'Mary, I must go back,' said Emmeline, when she first saw them; but Aunt Letty, who was with them, stepped forward, and they soon found themselves in the schoolroom.

'We have come to say good-bye to you all,' said Aunt Letty, trying to begin a speech.

'May the heavens be yer bed then, the lot of yez, for ye war always good to the poor. May the Blessed Virgin guide and protect ye wherever ye be;'—a blessing against which Aunt Letty at once entered a little inward protest, perturbed

though she was in spirit. 'May the heavens rain glory on yer heads, for ye war always the finest family that war ever in the county Cork!'

'You know, I dare say, that we are going to leave you,' continued Aunt Letty.

'We knows it, we knows it; sorrow come to them as did it all. Faix, an' there'll niver be any good in the counthry, at all at all, when you're gone, Miss Emmeline; an' what'll we do at all for the want of yez, and when shall we see the likes of yez? Eh, Miss Letty, but there'll be sore eyes weeping for ye; and for her leddyship too; may the Lord Almighty bless her, and presarve her, and carry her sowl to glory when she dies; for av there war iver a good woman on God's 'arth, that woman is Leddy Fitzgerald.'

And then Aunt Letty found that there was no necessity for her to continue her speech, and indeed no possibility of her doing so even if she were so minded. The children began to wail and cry, and the mothers also mixed loud sobbings with their loud prayers; and Emmeline and Mary, dissolved in tears, sat themselves down, drawing to them the youngest bairns and those whom they had loved the best, kissing their sallow, famine-stricken, unwholesome faces, and weeping over them with a love of which hitherto they had been hardly conscious.

There was not much more in the way of speech

possible to any of them, for even Aunt Letty was far gone in tender wailing; and it was wonderful to see the liberties that were taken even with that venerable bonnet. The women had first of all taken hold of her hands to kiss them, and had kissed her feet, and her garments, and her shoulders, and then behind her back they had made crosses on her, although they knew how dreadfully she would have raged had she caught them polluting her by such doings; and they grasped her arms and embraced them, till at last, those who were more daring, reached her forehead and her face, and poor old Aunt Letty, who in her emotion could not now utter a syllable, was almost pulled to pieces among them.

Mary and Emmeline had altogether surrendered themselves, and were the centres of clusters of children who hung upon them. And the sobs now were no longer low and tearful, but they had grown into long, protracted groanings, and loud wailings, and clapping of hands, and tearings of the hair. O, my reader, have you ever seen a railway train taking its departure from an Irish station, with a freight of Irish emigrants? if so, you know how the hair is torn, and how the hands are clapped, and how the low moanings gradually swell into notes of loud lamentation. It means nothing, I have heard men say,—men and women too. But such men and women are wrong. It

means much; it means this: that those who are separated, not only love each other, but are anxious to tell each other that they so love. We have all heard of demonstrative people. A demonstrative person, I take it, is he who is desirous of speaking out what is in his heart. For myself I am inclined to think that such speaking out has its good ends. 'The faculty of silence! is it not of all things the most beautiful?' That is the doctrine preached by a great latter-day philosopher; for myself, I think that the faculty of speech is much more beautiful—of speech if it be made but by howlings, and wailings, and loud clappings of the hand. What is in a man, let it come out and be known to those around him; if it be bad it will find correction; if it be good it will spread and be beneficent.

And then one woman made herself audible over the sobs of the crowding children; she was a gaunt, high-boned woman, but she would have been comely, if not handsome, had not the famine come upon her. She held a baby in her arms, and another little toddling thing had been hanging on her dress till Emmeline had seen it, and plucked it away; and it was now sitting in her lap quite composed, and sucking a piece of cake that had been given to it. 'An' it's a bad day for us all,' said the woman, beginning in a low voice, which became louder and londer as she went on;

'it's a bad day for us all that takes away from us the only rale friends that we iver had, and the back of my hand to them that have come in the way, bringin' sorrow, an' desolation, an' misery on gentlefolks that have been good to the poor since iver the poor have been in the land; rale gentlefolks, sich as there ain't no others to be found nowadays in any of these parts. O'hone, o'hone! but it's a bad day for us and for the childer; for where shall we find the dhrop to comfort us or the bit to ate when the sickness comes on us, as it's likely to come now, when the Fitzgeralds is out of the counthry. May the Lord bless them, and keep them, and presarve them, and the Holy Virgin have them in her keepin'!'

'Wh—i—s—h—h,' said Aunt Letty, who could not allow such idolatry to pass by unobserved or unrebuked.

'An' shure the blessin' of a poor woman cannot haram you,' continued the mother; 'an' I'll tell you what, neighbours, it'll be a bad day for him that folk call the heir when he puts his foot in that house.'

'Deed an' that's thrue for you, Bridget Magrath,' said another voice from among the crowd of women.

'A bad day intirely,' continued the woman, with the baby; 'av the house stans over his head when he does the like o' that, there'll be no justice in the heavens.'

'But, Mrs. Magrath,' said Aunt Letty, trying to interrupt her, 'you must not speak in that way; you are mistaken in supposing that Mr. Owen—'

'We'll all live to see,' said the woman; 'for the time's comin' quick upon us now. But it's a bad law that kills our ould masther over our heads, an' takes away from us our ould misthress. An' as for him they calls Mr. Owen—'

But the ladies found it impossible to listen to her any longer, so with some difficulty they extricated themselves from the crowd by which they were surrounded, and once more shaking hands with those who were nearest to them escaped into the park, and made their way back towards the house.

They had not expected so much demonstration, and were not a little disconcerted at the scene which had taken place. Aunt Letty had never been so handled in her life, and hardly knew how to make her bonnet sit comfortably on her head; and the two girls were speechless till they were half across the park.

'I am glad we have been,' said Emmeline at last, as soon as the remains of her emotion would allow her to articulate her words.

'It would have been dreadful to have gone away without seeing them,' said Mary. 'Poor creatures, poor dear creatures; we shall never again have any more people to be fond of us like that!'

'There is no knowing,' said Aunt Letty; 'the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and blessed is the name of the Lord. You are both young, and may come back again; but for me—'

'Dear Aunt Letty, if we come back you shall come too.'

'If I only thought that my bones could lie here near my brother's. But never mind; what signifies it where our bones lie?' And then they were silent for a while, till Aunt Letty spoke again. 'I mean to be quite happy over in England; I believe I shall be happiest of you all if I can find any clergyman who is not half perverted to idolatry.'

This took place some time before the ladies left Castle Richmond,—perhaps as much as three weeks; t was even before Herbert's departure, who started for London the day but one after the scene here recorded; he had gone to various places to take his last farewell; to see the Townsends at the parsonage; to call on Father Barney at Kanturk, and had even shaken hands with the Rev. Mr. Creagh, at Gortnaclough. But one farewell visit had been put off for the last. It was now arranged that he was to go over to Desmond Court and see Clara before he went. There had been some difficulty in this, for Lady Desmond had at first declared that she could not feel justified in asking him into her house; but the earl was now at home, and her ladyship had at last given her

consent: he was to see the countess first, and was afterwards to see Clara—alone. He had declared that he would not go there unless he were to be allowed an interview with her in private. The countess, as I have said, at last consented, trusting that her previous eloquence might be efficacious in counteracting the ill effects of her daughter's imprudence. On the day after that interview he was to start for London; 'never to return,' as he said to Emmeline, 'unless he came to seek his wife.'

'But you will come to seek your wife,' said Emmeline, stoutly; 'I shall think you faint-hearted if you doubt it.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST STAGE.

On the day before his departure for London, Herbert Fitzgerald once more got on his horse—the horse that was to be no longer his after that day—and rode off towards Desmond Court. He had already perceived how foolish he had been in walking thither through the mud and rain when last he went there, and how much he had lost by his sad appearance that day, and by his want of personal comfort. So he dressed himself with some care—dressing not for his love, but for the countess, —and taking his silver-mounted whip in his gloved hand, he got up on his well-groomed nag with more spirit that he had hitherto felt.

Nothing could be better than the manner in which, at this time, the servants about Castle Richmond conducted themselves. Most of them —indeed, all but three—had been told that they must go; and in so telling them, the truth had been explained. It had been 'found,' Aunt Letty

said to one of the elder among them, that Mr. Herbert was not the heir to the property, and therefore the family was obliged to go away. Mrs. Jones of course accompanied her mistress. Richard had been told, both by Herbert and by Aunt Letty, that he had better remain and live on a small patch of land that should be provided for him. But in answer to this he stated his intention of removing himself to London. If the London air was fit for 'my leddy and Miss Letty,' it would be fit for him. 'It's no good any more talking, Mr. Herbert,' said Richard, 'I main to go.' So there was no more talking, and he did go.

But all the other servants took their month's warning with tears and blessings, and strove one beyond another how they might best serve the ladies of the family to the end. 'I'd lose the little fingers off me to go with you, Miss Emmeline; so I would,' said one poor girl,—all in vain. If they could not keep a retinue of servants in Ireland, it was clear enough that they could not keep them in London.

The groom who held the horse for Herbert to mount, touched his hat respectfully as his young master rode off slowly down the avenue, and then went back to the stables to meditate with awe on the changes which had happened in his time, and to bethink himself whether or no he could bring

himself to serve in the stables of Owen the usurper.

Herbert did not take the direct road to Desmond Court, but went round as though he were going to Gortnaclough, and then turning away from the Gortnaclough road, made his way by a cross lane towards Clady and the mountains. He hardly knew himself whether he had any object in this beyond one which he did not express even to himself,—that, namely, of not being seen on the way leading to Desmond Court. But this he did do, thereby riding out of the district with which he was most thoroughly acquainted, and passing by cabins and patches of now deserted land which were strange to him. It was a poor, bleak, damp, undrained country, lying beyond the confines of his father's property, which in good days had never been pleasant to the eye, but which now in these days—days that were so decidedly bad, was anything but pleasant. It was one of those tracts of land which had been divided and subdivided among the cottiers till the fields had dwindled down to parts of acres, each surrounded by rude low banks, which of themselves seemed to occupy a quarter of the surface of the land. The original landmarks, the big earthen banks,—banks so large that a horse might walk on the top of them,—were still visible enough, showing to the practised eye what had once been the fields into which the land

had been divided; but these had since been bisected and crossected, and intersected by family arrangements, in which brothers had been jealous of brothers, and fathers of their children, till each little lot contained but a rood or two of available surface.

This had been miserable enough to look at, even when those roods had been cropped with potatoes or oats; but now they were not cropped at all, nor was there preparation being made for cropping them. They had been let out under the con-acre system, at so much a rood, for the potato season, at rents amounting sometimes to ten or twelve pounds the acre; but nobody would take them now. There, in that electoral division, the whole proceeds of such land would hardly have paid the poor rates, and therefore the land was left uncultivated.

The winter was over, for it was now April, and had any tillage been intended, it would have been commenced—even in Ireland. It was the beginning of April, but the weather was still stormy and cold, and the east wind, which, as a rule, strikes Ireland with but a light hand, was blowing sharply. On a sudden a squall of rain came on,—one of those spring squalls which are so piercingly cold, but which are sure to pass by rapidly, if the wayfarer will have patience to wait for them. Herbert, remembering his former discomfiture,

resolved that he would have such patience, and dismounting from his horse at a cabin on the road-side, entered it himself, and led his horse in after him. In England no one would think of taking his steed into a poor man's cottage, and would hardly put his beast into a cottager's shed without leave asked and granted; but people are more intimate with each other, and take greater liberties in Ireland. It is no uncommon thing on a wet hunting-day to see a cabin packed with horses, and the children moving about among them, almost as unconcernedly as though the animals were pigs. But then the Irish horses are so well mannered and good-natured.

The cabin was one abutting as it were on the road, not standing back upon the land, as is most customary; and it was built in an angle at a spot where the road made a turn, so that two sides of it stood close out in the wayside. It was small and wretched to look at, without any sort of outside shed, or even a scrap of potato-garden attached to it,—a miserable, low-roofed, damp, ragged tenement, as wretched as any that might be seen even in the county Cork.

But the nakedness of the exterior was as nothing to the nakedness of the interior. When Herbert entered, followed by his horse, his eye glanced round the dark place, and it seemed to be empty of everything. There was no fire on the hearth,

though a fire on the hearth is the easiest of all luxuries for an Irishman to acquire, and the last which he is willing to lose. There was not an article of furniture in the whole place; neither chairs, nor table, nor bed, nor dresser; there was there neither dish, nor cup, nor plate, nor even the iron pot in which all the cookery of the Irish cottiers' ménage is usually carried on. Beneath his feet was the damp earthen floor, and around him were damp, cracked walls, and over his head was the old lumpy thatch, through which the water was already dropping; but inside was to be seen none of those articles of daily use which are usually to be found in the houses even of the poorest.

But, nevertheless, the place was inhabited. Squatting in the middle of the cabin, seated on her legs crossed under her, with nothing between her and the wet earth, there crouched a woman with a child in her arms. At first, so dark was the place, Herbert hardly thought that the object before him was a human being. She did not move when he entered, or spoke to him, or in any way show sign of surprise that he should have come there. There was room for him and his horse without pushing her from her place; and, as it seemed, he might have stayed there and taken his departure without any sign having been made y her.

But as his eyes became used to the light he saw

her eyes gleaming brightly through the gloom. They were very large and bright as they turned round upon him while he moved—large and bright, but with a dull, unwholesome brightness,—a brightness that had in it none of the light of life.

And then he looked at her more closely. She had on her some rag of clothing which barely sufficed to cover her nakedness, and the baby which she held in her arms was covered in some sort; but he could see, as he came to stand close over her, that these garments were but loose rags which were hardly fastened round her body. Her rough short hair hung down upon her back, clotted with dirt, and the head and face of the child which she held was covered with dirt and sores. On no more wretched object, in its desolate solitude, did the eye of man ever fall.

In those days there was a form of face which came upon the sufferers when their state of misery was far advanced, and which was a sure sign that their last stage of misery was nearly run. The mouth would fall and seem to hang, the lips at the two ends of the mouth would be dragged down, and the lower parts of the cheeks would fall as though they had been dragged and pulled. There were no signs of acute agony when this phasis of countenance was to be seen, none of the horrid symptoms of gnawing hunger by which one generally supposes that famine is accompanied. The

look is one of apathy, desolation, and death. When custom had made these signs easily legible, the poor doomed wretch was known with certainty. 'It's no use in life meddling with him; he's gone,' said a lady to me in the far west of the south of Ireland, while the poor boy, whose doom was thus spoken, stood by listening. Her delicacy did not equal her energy in doing good,—for she did much good; but in truth it was difficult to be delicate when the hands were so full. And then she pointed out to me the signs on the lad's face, and I found that her reading was correct.

The famine was not old enough at the time of which we are speaking for Herbert to have learned all this, or he would have known that there was no hope left in this world for the poor creature whom he saw before him. The skin of her cheek had fallen, and her mouth was dragged, and the mark of death was upon her; but the agony of want was past. She sat there listless, indifferent, hardly capable of suffering, even for her child, waiting her doom unconsciously.

As he had entered without eliciting a word from her, so might he have departed without any outward sign of notice; but this would have been impossible on his part. 'I have come in out of the rain for shelter,' said he, looking down on her.

'Out o' the rain, is it?' said she, still fixing on

him her glassy bright eyes. 'Yer honour's welcome thin.' But she did not attempt to move, nor show any of those symptoms of reverence which are habitual to the Irish when those of a higher rank enter their cabins.

'You seem to be very poorly off here,' said Herbert, looking round the bare walls of the cabin. 'Have you no chair, and no bed to lie on?'

''Deed no,' said she.

'And no fire?' said he, for the damp and chill of the place struck through to his bones.

''Deed no,' she said again; but she made no wail as to her wants, and uttered no complaint as to her misery.

'And are you living here by yourself, without furniture or utensils of any kind?'

'It's jist as yer honour sees it,' answered she.

For a while Herbert stood still, looking round him, for the woman was so motionless and uncommunicative that he hardly knew how to talk to her. That she was in the lowest depth of distress was evident enough, and it behoved him to administer to her immediate wants before he left her; but what could he do for one who seemed to be so indifferent to herself? He stood for a time looking round him till he could see through the gloom that there was a bundle of straw lying in the dark corner beyond the hearth, and that the straw was huddled up, as though there were something lying

under it. Seeing this he left the bridle of his horse, and stepping across the cabin moved the straw with the handle of his whip. As he did so he turned his back from the wall in which the small window-hole had been pierced, so that a gleam of light fell upon the bundle at his feet, and he could see that the body of a child was lying there, stripped of every vestige of clothing.

For a minute or two he said nothing—hardly, indeed, knowing how to speak, and looking from the corpselike woman back to the lifelike corpse, and then from the corpse back to the woman, as though he expected that she would say something unasked. But she did not say a word, though she so turned her head that her eyes rested on him.

He then knelt down and put his hand upon the body, and found that it was not yet stone cold. The child apparently had been about four years old, while that still living in her arms might perhaps be half that age.

'Was she your own?' asked Herbert, speaking hardly above his breath.

''Deed, yes!' said the woman. 'She was my own, own little Kitty.' But there was no tear in her eye or gurgling sob audible from her throat.

'And when did she die?' he asked.

''Deed, thin, and I don't jist know—not exactly;' and sinking lower down upon her haunches, she put up to her forehead the hand with which she

had supported herself on the floor—the hand which was not occupied with the baby, and pushing back with it the loose hairs from her face, tried to make an effort at thinking.

'She was alive in the night, wasn't she?' he said.

'I b'lieve thin she was, yer honour. 'Twas broad day, I'm thinking, when she guv' over moaning. She warn't that way when he went away.'

'And who's he?'

'Jist Mike, thin.'

'And is Mike your husband?' he asked. She was not very willing to talk; but it appeared at last that Mike was her husband, and that having become a cripple through rheumatism, he had not been able to work on the roads. In this condition he and his should of course have gone into a poor-house. It was easy enough to give such advice in such cases when one came across them, and such advice when given at that time was usually followed; but there were so many who had no advice, who could get no aid, who knew not which way to turn themselves! This wretched man had succeeded in finding some one who would give him his food—food enough to keep himself alive—for such work as he could do in spite of his rheumatism, and this work to the last he would not abandon. Even this was better to him than the poor-house. But then, as long as a man found

work out of the poor-house, his wife and children would not be admitted into it. They would not be admitted if the fact of the working husband was known. The rule in itself was salutary, as without it a man could work, earning such wages as were adjudged to be needful for a family, and at the same time send his wife and children to be supported on the rates. But in some cases, such as this, it pressed very cruelly. Exceptions were of course made in such cases, if they were known: but then it was so hard to know them!

This man Mike, the husband of that woman, and the father of those children, alive and dead, had now gone to his work, leaving his home without one morsel of food within it, and the wife of his bosom and children of his love without the hope of getting any. And then looking closely round him, Herbert could see that a small basin or bowl lay on the floor near her, capable of holding perhaps a pint; and on lifting it he saw that there still clung to it a few grains of uncooked Indian corn-flour—the yellow meal, as it was called. Her husband, she said at last, had brought home with him in his cap a handful of this flour, stolen from the place where he was working—perhaps a quarter of a pound, then worth over a farthing, and she had mixed this with water in a basin; and this was the food which had sustained her, or rather had not sustained her, since yesterday morning—her

and her two children, the one that was living and the one that was dead.

Such was her story, told by her in the fewest of words. And then he asked her as to her hopes for the future. But though she cared, as it seemed, but little for the past, for the future she cared less. 'Deed, thin, an' I don't jist know.' She would say no more than that, and would not even raise her voice to ask for alms when he pitied her in her misery. But with her the agony of death was already over.

'And the child that you have in your arms,' he said, 'is it not cold?' And he stood close over her, and put out his hand and touched the baby's body. As he did so, she made some motion as though to arrange the clothing closer round the child's limbs, but Herbert could see that she was making an effort to hide her own nakedness. It was the only effort that she made while he stood there beside her.

'Is she not cold?' he said again, when he had turned his face away to relieve her from her embarrassment.

'Cowld,' she muttered, with a vacant face and wondering tone of voice, as though she did not quite understand him. 'I suppose she is could. Why wouldn't she be could? We're could enough, if that's all.' But still she did not stir from the spot on which she sat; and the child, though it

gave from time to time a low moan that was almost inaudible, lay still in her arms, with its big eyes staring into vacancy.

He felt that he was stricken with horror as he remained there in the cabin with the dying woman and the naked corpse of the poor dead child. But what was he to do? He could not go and leave them without succour. The woman had made no plaint of her suffering, and had asked for nothing; but he felt that it would be impossible to abandon her without offering her relief; nor was it possible that he should leave the body of the child in that horribly ghastly state. So he took from his pocket his silk handkerchief, and, returning to the corner of the cabin, spread it as a covering over the corpse. At first he did not like to touch the small naked dwindled remains of humanity from which life had fled; but gradually he overcame his disgust, and kneeling down, he straightened the limbs and closed the eyes, and folded the handkerchief round the slender body. The mother looked on him the while, shaking her head slowly, as though asking him with all the voice that was left to her, whether it were not piteous; but of words she still uttered none.

And then he took from his pocket a silver coin or two, and tendered them to her. These she did take, muttering some word of thanks, but they caused in her no emotion of joy. 'She was there

waiting,' she said, 'till Mike should return,' and there she would still wait, even though she should die with the silver in her hand.

'I will send some one to you,' he said, as he took his departure; 'some one that shall take the poor child and bury it, and who shall move you and the other one into the workhouse.' She thanked him once more with some low muttered words, but the promise brought her no joy. And when the succour came it was all too late, for the mother and the two children never left the cabin till they left it together, wrapped in their workhouse shrouds.

Herbert, as he remounted his horse and rode quietly on, forgot for a while both himself and Clara Desmond. Whatever might be the extent of his own calamity, how could he think himself unhappy after what he had seen? how could he repine at aught that the world had done for him, having now witnessed to how low a state of misery a fellow human being might be brought? Could he, after that, dare to consider himself unfortunate?

Before he reached Desmond Court he did make same arrangements for the poor woman, and directed that a cart might be sent for her, so that she might be carried to the union workhouse at Kanturk. But his efforts in her service were of little avail. People then did not think much of a dying woman, and were in no special hurry to obey Herbert's behest.

'A woman to be carried to the union, is it? For Mr. Fitzgerald, eh? What Mr. Fitzgerald says must be done, in course. But sure av' it's done before dark, won't that be time enough for the likes of her?'

But had they flown to the spot on the wings of love, it would not have sufficed to prolong her life one day. Her doom had been spoken before Herbert had entered the cabin.

CHAPTER V.

FAREWELL.

He was two hours later than he had intended as he rode up the avenue to Lady Desmond's gate, and his chief thought at the moment was how he should describe to the countess the scene he had just witnessed. Why describe it at all? That is what we should all say. He had come there to talk about other things—about other things which must be discussed, and which would require all his wits. Let him keep that poor woman on his mind, but not embarrass himself with any mention of her for the present. This, no doubt, would have been wise if only it had been possible; but out of the full heart the mouth speaks.

But Lady Desmond had not witnessed the scene which I have attempted to describe, and her heart, therefore, was not full of it, and was not inclined to be so filled. And so, in answer to Herbert's exclamation, 'Oh, Lady Desmond, I have seen such a sight!' she gave him but little encouragement to describe it, and by her coldness, reserve,

and dignity, soon quelled the expression of his feelings.

The earl was present and shook hands very cordially with Herbert when he entered the room; and he, being more susceptible as being younger, and not having yet become habituated to the famine as his mother was, did express some eager sympathy. He would immediately go down, or send Fahy with the car, and have her brought up and saved; but his mother had other work to do and soon put a stop to all this.

'Mr. Fitzgerald,' said she, speaking with a smile upon her face, and with much high-bred dignity of demeanour, 'as you and Lady Clara both wish to see each other before you leave the country, and as you have known each other so intimately, and considering all the circumstances, I have not thought it well absolutely to forbid an interview. But I do doubt its expediency; I do, indeed. And Lord Desmond, who feels for your late misfortune as we all do, perfectly agrees with me. He thinks that it would be much wiser for you both to have parted without the pain of a meeting, seeing how impossible it is that you should ever be more to each other than you are now.' And then she appealed to her son, who stood by, looking not quite so wise, nor even quite so decided as his mother's words would seem to make him.

'Well, yes; upon my word I don't see how it's

to be,' said the young earl. 'I am deuced sorry for it for one, and I wish I was well off, so that I could give Clara a pot of money, and then I should not care so much about your not being the baronet.'

'I am sure you must see, Mr. Fitzgerald, and I know that you do see it because you have very properly said so, that a marriage between you and Lady Clara is now impossible. For her such an engagement would be very bad—very bad indeed; but for you it would be utter ruin. Indeed, it would be ruin for you both. Unencumbered as you will be, and with the good connection which you will have, and with your excellent talents, it will be quite within your reach to win for yourself a high position. But with you, as with other gentlemen who have to work their way, marriage must come late in life, unless you marry an heiress. This I think is thoroughly understood by all people in our position; and I am sure that it is understood by your excellent mother, for whom I always had and still have the most unfeigned respect. As this is so undoubtedly the case, and as I cannot of course consent that Lady Clara should remain hampered by an engagement which would in all human probability hang over the ten best years of her life, I thought it wise that you should not see each other. I have, however, allowed myself to be overruled; and now I must only trust to your

honour, forbearance, and prudence to protect my child from what might possibly be the ill effects of her own affectionate feelings. That she is romantic, —enthusiastic to a fault I should perhaps rather call it, I need not tell you. She thinks that your misfortune demands from her a sacrifice of herself; but you, I know, will feel that, even were such a sacrifice available to you, it would not become you to accept it. Because you have fallen, you will not wish to drag her down; more especially as you can rise again—and she could not.'

So spoke the countess, with much worldly wisdom, and with considerable tact in adjusting her words to the object which she had in view. Herbert, as he stood before her silent during the period of her oration, did feel that it would be well for him to give up his love, and go away in utter solitude of heart to those dingy studies which Mr. Prendergast was preparing for him. His love, or rather the assurance of Clara's love, had been his great consolation. But what right had he, with all the advantages of youth, and health, and friends, and education, to require consolation? And then from moment to moment he thought of the woman whom he had left in the cabin, and confessed that he did not dare to call himself unhappy.

He had listened attentively, although he did thus think of other eloquence besides that of the countess —of the eloquence of that silent, solitary, dying

woman; but when she had done he hardly knew what to say for himself. She did make him feel that it would be ungenerous in him to persist in his engagement; but then again, Clara's letters and his sister's arguments had made him feel that it was impossible to abandon it. They pleaded of heart-feelings so well that he could not resist them; and the countess—she pleaded so well as to world's prudence that he could not resist her.

'I would not willingly do anything to injure Lady Clara,' he said.

'That's what we all knew,' said the young earl. 'You see, what is a girl to do like her? Love in a cottage is all very well, and all that; and as for riches, I don't care about them. It would be a pity if I did, for I shall be about the poorest nobleman in the three kingdoms, I suppose. But a chap when he marries should have something; shouldn't he now?'

To tell the truth the earl had been very much divided in his opinions since he had come home, veering round a point or two this way or a point or two that, in obedience to the blast of eloquence to which he might be last subjected. But latterly the idea had grown upon him that Clara might possibly marry Owen Fitzgerald. There was about Owen a strange fascination which all felt who had once loved him. To the world he was rough and haughty, imperious in his commands, and exacting

even in his fellowship; but to the few whom he absolutely loved, whom he had taken into his heart's core, no man ever was more tender or more gracious. Clara, though she had resolved to banish him from her heart, had found it impossible to do so till Herbert's misfortunes had given him a charm in her eyes which was not all his own. Clara's mother had loved him—had loved him as she never before had loved; and now she loved him still, though she had so strongly determined that her love should be that of a mother, and not that of a wife. And the young earl, now that Owen's name was again rife in his ears, remembered all the pleasantness of former days. He had never again found such a companion as Owen had been. He had met no other friend to whom he could talk of sport and a man's outward pleasures when his mind was that way given, and to whom he could also talk of soft inward things,—the heart's feelings, and aspirations, and wants. Owen would be as tender with him as a woman, allowing the young lad's arm round his body, listening to words which the outer world would have called bosh—and have derided as girlish. So at least thought the young earl to himself. And all boys long to be allowed utterance occasionally for these soft tender things; —as also do all men, unless the devil's share in the world has become altogether uppermost with them.

And the young lad's heart hankered after his old friend. He had listened to his sister, and for a while had taken her part; but his mother had since whispered to him that Owen would now be the better suitor, the preferable brother-in-law; and that in fact Clara loved Owen the best, though she felt herself bound by honour to his kinsman. And then she reminded her son of Clara's former love for Owen—a love which he himself had witnessed; and he thought of the day when with so much regret he had told his friend that he was unsuited to wed with an earl's penniless daughter. Of the subsequent pleasantness which had come with Herbert's arrival, he had seen little or nothing. He had been told by letter that Herbert Fitzgerald, the prosperous heir of Castle Richmond, was to be his future brother-in-law, and he had been satisfied. But now, if Owen could return—how pleasant it would be!

'But a chap when he marries should have something; shouldn't he now?' So spoke the young earl, re-echoing his mother's prudence.

Herbert did not quite like this interference on the boy's part. Was he to explain to a young lad from Eton what his future intentions were with reference to his mode of living and period of marriage? 'Of course,' he said, addressing himself to the countess, 'I shall not insist on an engagement made under such different circumstances.'

'Nor will you allow her to do so through a romantic feeling of generosity,' said the countess.

'You should know your own daughter, Lady Desmond, better than I do,' he answered; 'but I cannot say what I may do at her instance till I shall have seen her.'

'Do you mean to say that you will allow a girl of her age to talk you into a proceeding which you know to be wrong?'

'I will allow no one,' he said, 'to talk me into a proceeding which I know to be wrong; nor will I allow any one to talk me out of a proceeding which I believe to be right.' And then, having uttered these somewhat grandiloquent words, he shut himself up as though there were no longer any need for discussing the subject.

'My poor child!' said the countess, in a low tremulous voice, as though she did not intend him to hear them. 'My poor unfortunate child!' Herbert as he did hear them thought of the woman in the cabin, and of her misfortunes and of her children. 'Come, Patrick,' continued the countess, 'it is perhaps useless for us to say anything further at present. If you will remain here, Mr. Fitzgerald, for a minute or two, I will send Lady Clara to wait upon you;' and then curtsying with great dignity she withdrew, and the young earl scuffled out after her. 'Mamma,' he said, as he went, 'he is determined that he will have her.'

'My poor child!' answered the countess.

'And if I were in his place I should be determined also. You may as well give it up. Not but that I like Owen a thousand times the best.'

Herbert did wait there for some five minutes, and then the door was opened very gently, was gently closed again, and Clara Desmond was in the room. He came towards her respectfully, holding out his hand that he might take hers; but before he had thought of how she would act she was in his arms. Hitherto, of all betrothed maidens, she had been the most retiring. Sometimes he had thought her cold when she had left the seat by his side to go and nestle closely by his sister. She had avoided the touch of his hand and the pressure of his arm, and had gone from him speechless, if not with anger then with dismay, when he had carried the warmth of his love beyond the touch of his hand or the pressure of his arm. But now she rushed into his embrace and hid her face upon his shoulder, as though she were over glad to return to the heart from which those around her had endeavoured to banish her. Was he or was he not to speak of his love? That had been the question which he had asked himself when left alone there for those five minutes, with the eloquence of the countess ringing in his ears. Now that question had in truth been answered for him.

'Herbert,' she said, 'Herbert! I have so sorrowed for you; but I know that you have borne it like a man.'

She was thinking of what he had now half forgotten,—the position which he had lost, those hopes which had all been shipwrecked, his title surrendered to another, and his lost estates. She was thinking of them as the loss affected him; but he, he had reconciled himself to all that,—unless all that were to separate him from his promised bride.

'Dearest Clara,' he said, with his arm close round her waist, while neither anger nor dismay appeared to disturb the sweetness of that position, 'the letter which you wrote me has been my chief comfort.' Now if he had any intention of liberating Clara from the bond of her engagement,—if he really had any feeling that it behoved him not to involve her in the worldly losses which had come upon him,—he was taking a very bad way of carrying out his views in that respect. Instead of confessing the comfort which he had received from that letter, and holding her close to his breast while he did confess it, he should have stood away from her—quite as far apart as he had done from the countess; and he should have argued with her, showing her how foolish and imprudent her letter had been, explaining that it behoved her now to repress her feelings, and teaching her that peers' daughters as well as housemaids should look out

for situations which would suit them, guided by prudence and a view to the wages,—not follow the dictates of impulse and of the heart. This is what he should have done, according, I believe, to the views of most men and women. Instead of that he held her there as close as he could hold her, and left her to do the most of the speaking. I think he was right. According to my ideas woman's love should be regarded as fair prize of war,—as long as the war has been carried on with due adherence to the recognized law of nations. When it has been fairly won, let it be firmly held. I have no opinion of that theory of giving up.

'You knew that I would not abandon you! Did you not know it? say that you knew it?' said Clara, and then she insisted on having an answer.

'I could hardly dare to think that there was so much happiness left for me,' said Herbert.

'Then you were a traitor to your love, sir; a false traitor.' But deep as was the offence for which she arraigned him, it was clear to see that the pardon came as quick as the conviction. 'And was Emmeline so untrue to me also as to believe that?'

'Emmeline said—' and then he told her what Emmeline had said.

'Dearest, dearest Emmeline! give her a whole heart-load of love from me; now mind you do,—and to Mary, too. And remember this, sir; that

I love Emmeline ten times better than I do you; twenty times—, because she knew me. Oh, if she had mistrusted me—!'

'And do you think that I mistrusted you?'

'Yes, you did; you know you did, sir. You wrote and told me so;—and now, this very day, you come here to act as though you mistrusted me still. You know you have, only you have not the courage to go on with the acting.'

And then he began to defend himself, showing how ill it would have become him to have kept her bound to her engagements had she feared poverty as most girls in her position would have feared it. But on this point she would not hear much from him, lest the very fact of her hearing it should make it seem that such a line of conduct were possible to her.

'You know nothing about most girls, sir, or about any, I am afraid; not even about one. And if most girls were frightfully heartless, which they are not, what right had you to liken me to most girls? Emmeline knew better, and why could not you take her as a type of most girls? You have behaved very badly, Master Herbert, and you know it; and nothing on earth shall make me forgive you; nothing—but your promise that you will not so misjudge me any more.' And then the tears came to his eyes, and her face was again hidden on his shoulder.

It was not very probable that after such a commencement the interview would terminate in a manner favourable to the wishes of the countess. Clara swore to her lover that she had given him all that she had to give,—her heart, and will, and very self; and swore, also, that she could not and would not take back the gift. She would remain as she was now as long as he thought proper, and would come to him whenever he should tell her that his home was large enough for them both. And so that matter was settled between them.

Then she had much to say about his mother and sisters, and a word too about his poor father. And now that it was settled between them so fixedly, that come what might they were to float together in the same boat down the river of life, she had a question or two also to ask, and her approbation to give or to withhold, as to his future prospects. He was not to think, she told him, of deciding on anything without at any rate telling her. So he had to explain to her all the family plans, making her know why he had decided on the law as his own path to fortune, and asking for and obtaining her consent to all his proposed measures.

In this way her view of the matter became more and more firmly adopted as that which should be the view resolutely to be taken by them both. The countess had felt that that interview would

be fatal to her; and she had been right. But how could she have prevented it? Twenty times she had resolved that she would prevent it; but twenty times she had been forced to confess that she was powerless to do so. In these days a mother even can only exercise such power over a child as public opinion permits her to use. 'Mother, it was you who brought us together, and you cannot separate us now.' That had always been Clara's argument, leaving the countess helpless, except as far as she could work on Herbert's generosity. That she had tried,—and, as we have seen, been foiled there also. If only she could have taken her daughter away while the Castle Richmond family were still mersed in the bitter depth of their suffering,—at that moment when the blows were falling on them! Then, indeed, she might have done something; but she was not like other titled mothers. In such a step as this she was absolutely without the means.

Thus talking together they remained closeted for a most unconscionable time. Clara had had her purpose to carry out, and to Herbert the moments had been too precious to cause him any regret as they passed. But now at last a knock was heard at the door, and Lady Desmond, without waiting for an answer to it, entered the room. Clara immediately started from her seat, not as though she were either guilty or tremulous, but

with a brave resolve to go on with her purposed plan.

'Mamma,' she said, 'it is fixed now; it cannot be altered now.'

'What is fixed, Clara?'

'Herbert and I have renewed our engagement, and nothing must now break it, unless we die.'

'Mr. Fitzgerald, if this be true your conduct to my daughter has been unmanly as well as ungenerous.'

'Lady Desmond, it is true; and I think that my conduct is neither unmanly nor ungenerous.'

'Your own relations are against you, sir.'

'What relations?' asked Clara, sharply.

'I am not speaking to you, Clara; your absurdity and romance are so great that I cannot speak to you.'

'What relations, Herbert?' again asked Clara; for she would not for the world have had Lady Fitzgerald against her.

'Lady Desmond has, I believe, seen my Aunt Letty two or three times lately; I suppose she must mean her.'

'Oh,' said Clara, turning away as though she were now satisfied. And then Herbert, escaping from the house as quickly as he could, rode home with a renewal of that feeling of triumph which he had once enjoyed before when returning from Desmond Court to Castle Richmond.

On the next day Herbert started for London. The parting was sad enough, and the occasion of it was such that it could hardly be otherwise. 'I am quite sure of one thing,' he said to his sister Emmeline, 'I shall never see Castle Richmond again.' And, indeed, one may say that small as might be his chance of doing so, his wish to do so must be still less. There could be no possible inducement to him to come back to a place which had so nearly been his own, and the possession of which he had lost in so painful a manner. Every tree about the place, every path across the wide park, every hedge and ditch and hidden leafy corner, had had for him a special interest,—for they had all been his own. But all that was now over. They were not only not his own, but they belonged to one who was mounting into his seat of power over his head.

He had spent the long evening before his last dinner in going round the whole demesne alone, so that no eye should witness what he felt. None but those who have known the charms of a country-house early in life can conceive the intimacy to which a man attains with all the various trifling objects round his own locality; how he knows the bark of every tree, and the bend of every bough; how he has marked where the rich grass grows in tufts, and where the poorer soil is always dry and bare; how he watches the nests of

the rooks, and the holes of the rabbits, and has learned where the thrushes build, and can show the branch on which the linnet sits. All these things had been dear to Herbert, and they all required at his hand some last farewell. Every dog too, he had to see, and to lay his hand on the neck of every horse. This making of his final adieu under such circumstances was melancholy enough.

And then, too, later in the evening, after dinner, all the servants were called into the parlour that he might shake hands with them. There was not one of them who had not hoped, as lately as three months since, that he or she would live to call Herbert Fitzgerald master. Indeed, he had already been their master—their young master. All Irish servants especially love to pay respect to the 'young masther;' but Herbert now was to be their master no longer, and the probability was that he would never see one of them again.

He schooled himself to go through the ordeal with a manly gait and with dry eyes, and he did it; but their eyes were not dry, not even those of the men. Mrs. Jones and a favourite girl whom the young ladies patronized were not of the number, for it had been decided that they should follow the fortunes of their mistress; but Richard was there, standing a little apart from the others, as being now on a different footing. He was to go also, but

before the scene was over he also had taken to sobbing violently.

'I wish you all well and happy,' said Herbert, making his little speech, 'and regret deeply that the intercourse between us should be thus suddenly severed. You have served me and mine well and truly, and it is hard upon you now, that you should be bid to go and seek another home elsewhere.'

'It isn't that we mind, Mr. Herbert; it ain't that as frets us,' said one of the men.

'It ain't that at all, at all,' said Richard, doing chorus; 'but that yer honour should be robbed of what is yer honour's own.'

'But you all know that we cannot help it,' continued Herbert; 'a misfortune has come upon us which nobody could have foreseen, and therefore we are obliged to part with our old friends and servants.'

At the word friends the maid-servants all sobbed. 'And 'deed we is your frinds, and true frinds, too,' wailed the cook.

'I know you are, and it grieves me to feel that I shall see you no more. But you must not be led to think by what Richard says that anybody is depriving me of that which ought to be my own. I am now leaving Castle Richmond because it is not my own, but justly belongs to another;—to another who, I must in justice tell you, is in no hurry to claim

his inheritance. We none of us have any ground for displeasure against the present owner of this place, my cousin, Sir Owen Fitzgerald.'

'We don't know nothing about Sir Owen,' said one voice.

'And don't want,' said another, convulsed with sobs.

'He's a very good sort of young gentleman—of his own kind, no doubt,' said Richard.

'But you can all of you understand,' continued Herbert, 'that as this place is no longer our own, we are obliged to leave it; and as we shall live in a very different way in the home to which we are going, we are obliged to part with you, though we have no reason to find fault with any one among you. I am going to-morrow morning early, and my mother and sisters will follow after me in a few weeks. It will be a sad thing too for them to say good-bye to you all, as it is for me now; but it cannot be helped. God bless you all, and I hope that you will find good masters and kind mistresses, with whom you may live comfortably, as I hope you have done here.'

'We can't find no other mistresses like her leddyship,' sobbed out the senior housemaid.

'There ain't niver such a one in the county Cork,' said the cook; 'in a week of Sundays you wouldn't hear the breath out of her above her own swait nathural voice.'

'I've driv' her since iver—' began Richard; but he was going to say since ever she was married, but he remembered that this allusion would be unbecoming, so he turned his face to the door-post, and began to wail bitterly.

And then Herbert shook hands with them all, and it was pretty to see how the girls wiped their hands in their aprons before they gave them to him, and how they afterwards left the room with their aprons up to their faces. The women walked out first, and then the men, hanging down their heads, and muttering as they went, each some little prayer that fortune and prosperity might return to the house of Fitzgerald. The property might go, but according to their views Herbert was always, and always would be, the head of the house. And then, last of all, Richard went. 'There ain't one of 'em, Mr. Herbert, as wouldn't guv his fist to go wid yer, and think nothing about the wages.'

He was to start very early, and his packing was all completed that night. 'I do so wish we were going with you,' said Emmeline, sitting in his room on the top of a corded box, which was to follow him by some slower conveyance.

'And I do so wish I was staying with you,' said he.

'What is the good of staying here now?' said she; 'what pleasure can there be in it? I hardly

dare to go outside the house door for fear I should be seen.'

'But why? We have done nothing that we need be ashamed of.'

'No; I know that. But, Herbert, do you not find that the pity of the people is hard to bear? It it written in their eyes, and meets one at every turn.'

'We shall get rid of that very soon. In a few months we shall be clean forgotten.'

'I do not know about being forgotten.'

'You will be as clean forgotten,—as though you had never existed. And all these servants who are now so fond of us, in three months' time will be just as fond of Owen Fitzgerald, if he will let them stay here; it's the way of the world.'

That Herbert should have indulged in a little morbid misanthropy on such an occasion was not surprising. But I take leave to think that he was wrong in his philosophy; we do make new friends when we lose our old friends, and the heart is capable of cure as is the body; were it not so, how terrible would be our fate in this world! But we are so apt to find fault with God's goodness to us in this respect, arguing, of others if not of ourselves, that the heart once widowed should remain a widow through all time. I, for one, think that the heart should receive its new spouses with what alacrity it may, and always with thankfulness.

'I suppose Lady Desmond will let us see Clara,' said Emmeline.

'Of course you must see her. If you knew how much she talks about you, you would not think of leaving Ireland without seeing her.'

'Dear Clara! I am sure she does not love me better than I do her. But suppose that Lady Desmond won't let us see her! and I know that it will be so. That grave old man with the bald head will come out and say that "the Lady Clara is not at home," and then we shall have to leave without seeing her. But it does not matter with her as it might with others, for I know that her heart will be with us.'

'If you write beforehand to say that you are coming, and explain that you are doing so to say good-bye, then I think they will admit you.'

'Yes; and the countess would take care to be there, so that I could not say one word to Clara about you. Oh, Herbert! I would give anything if I could have her here for one day,—only for one day.' But when they talked it over they both of them decided that this would not be practicable. Clara could not stay away from her own house without her mother's leave, and it was not probable that her mother would give her permission to stay at Castle Richmond.

CHAPTER V.

HERBERT FITZGERALD IN LONDON.

On the following morning the whole household was up and dressed very early. Lady Fitzgerald—the poor lady made many futile attempts to drop her title, but hitherto without any shadow of success—Lady Fitzgerald was down in the breakfast parlour at seven, as also were Aunt Letty, and Mary, and Emmeline. Herbert had begged his mother not to allow herself to be disturbed, alleging that there was no cause, seeing that they all so soon would meet in London; but she was determined that she would superintend his last meal at Castle Richmond. The servants brought in the trays with melancholy silence, and now that the absolute moment of parting had come the girls could not speak lest the tears should come and choke them. It was not that they were about to part with him; that parting would only be for a month. But he was now about to part from all that ought to have been his own. He sat down at the table in his accustomed place, with

a forced smile on his face, but without a word, and his sisters put before him his cup of tea, and the slice of ham that had been cut for him, and his portion of bread. That he was making an effort they all saw. He bowed his head down over the tea to sip it and took the knife in his hand, and then he looked up at them, for he knew that their eyes were on him; he looked up at them to show that he could still endure it. But, alas! he could not endure it. The struggle was too much for him; he pushed his plate violently from him into the middle of the table, and dropping his head upon his hands he burst forth into audible lamentations.

Oh, my friends! be not hard on him in that he was thus weeping like a woman. It was not for his lost wealth that he was wailing, nor even for the name or splendour that could be no longer his; nor was it for his father's memory, though he had truly loved his father; nor for his mother's sorrow, or the tragedy of her life's history. For none of these things were his tears flowing and his sobs coming so violently that it nearly choked him to repress them. Nor could he himself have said why he was weeping.

It was the hundred small things from which he was parting for ever that thus disturbed him. The chair on which he sat, the carpet on the floor, the table on which he leaned, the dull old picture

of his great-grandfather over the fireplace,—they were all his old familiar friends, they were all part of Castle Richmond,—of that Castle Richmond which he might never be allowed to see again.

His mother and sisters came to him, hanging over him, and they joined their tears together. 'Do not tell her that I was like this,' said he at last.

'She will love you the better for it if she has a true woman's heart within her breast,' said his mother.

'As true a heart as ever breathed,' said Emmeline through her sobs.

And then they pressed him to eat, but it was in vain. He knew that the food would choke him if he attempted it. So he gulped down the cup of tea, and with one kiss to his mother he rushed from them, refusing Aunt Letty's proffered embrace, passing through the line of servants without another word to one of them, and burying himself in the post-chaise which was to carry him the first stage on his melancholy journey.

It was a melancholy journey all through. From the time that he left the door at Castle Richmond that was no longer his own, till he reached the Euston Station in London, he spoke no word to any one more than was absolutely necessary for the purposes of his travelling. Nothing could be more sad than the prospect of his residence in London. Not that he was without friends there,

for he belonged to a fashionable club to which he could still adhere if it so pleased him, and had all his old Oxford comrades to fall back upon if that were of any service to him. But how is a man to walk into his club who yesterday was known as his father's eldest son and the heir to a baronetcy and twelve thousand a year, and who to-day is known as nobody's son and the heir to nothing? Men would feel so much for him and pity him so deeply! That was the worst feature of his present position. He could hardly dare to show himself more than was absolutely necessary till the newness of his tragedy was worn off.

Mr. Prendergast had taken lodgings for him, in which he was to remain till he could settle himself in the same house with his mother. And this house, in which they were all to live, had also been taken,—up in that cheerful locality near Harrow-on-the-Hill, called St. John's Wood Road, the cab fares to which from any central part of London are so very ruinous. But that house was not yet ready, and so he went into lodgings in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mr. Prendergast had chosen this locality because it was near the chambers of that great Chancery barrister, Mr. Die, under whose beneficent wing Herbert Fitzgerald was destined to learn all the mysteries of the Chancery bar. The sanctuary of Mr. Die's wig was in Stone Buildings, immediately close to that milky way of vice-chan-

cellors, whose separate courts cluster about the old chapel of Lincoln's Inn; and here was Herbert to sit, studious, for the next three years,—to sit there instead of at the various relief committees in the vicinity of Kanturk. And why could he not be as happy at the one as at the other? Would not Mr. Die be as amusing as Mr. Townsend; and the arguments of Vice-Chancellor Stuart's court quite as instructive as those heard in the committee room at Gortnaclough?

On the morning of his arrival in London he drove to his lodgings, and found a note there from Mr. Prendergast asking him to dinner on that day, and promising to take him to Mr. Die on the following morning. Mr. Prendergast kept a bachelor's house in Bloomsbury Square, not very far from Lincoln's Inn—just across Holborn, as all Londoners know; and there he would expect Herbert at seven o'clock. 'I will not ask any one to meet you,' he said, 'because you will be tired after your journey, and perhaps more inclined to talk to me than to strangers.'

Mr. Prendergast was one of those old-fashioned people who think that a spacious substantial house in Bloomsbury Square, at a rent of a hundred and twenty pounds a year, is better worth having than a narrow, lath and plaster, ill-built tenement at nearly double the price out westward of the Parks. A quite new man is necessarily afraid of such a

locality as Bloomsbury Square, for he has no chance of getting any one into his house if he do not live westward. Who would dine with Mr. Jones in Woburn Terrace, unless he had known Mr. Jones all his days, or unless Jones were known as a top sawyer in some walk of life? But Mr. Prendergast was well enough known to his old friends to be allowed to live where he pleased, and he was not very anxious to add to their number by any new fashionable allurements.

Herbert sent over to Bloomsbury Square to say that he would be there at seven o'clock, and then sat himself down in his new lodgings. It was but a dingy abode, consisting of a narrow sitting-room looking out into the big square from over a covered archway, and a narrower bedroom looking backwards into a dull, dirty-looking, crooked street. Nothing, he thought, could be more melancholy than such a home. But then what did it signify? His days would be passed in Mr. Die's chambers, and his evenings would be spent over his law books with closed windows and copious burnings of the midnight oil. For Herbert had wisely resolved that hard work, and hard work alone, could mitigate the misery of his present position.

But he had no work for the present day. He could not at once unpack his portmanteau and begin his law studies on the moment. It was about noon when he had completed the former

preparation, and eaten such breakfast as his new London landlady had gotten for him. And the breakfast had not of itself been bad, for Mrs. Whereas had been a daughter of Themis all her life, waiting upon scions of the law since first she had been able to run for a penn'orth of milk. She had been laundress on a stairs for ten years, having married a law stationer's apprentice, and now she owned the dingy house over the covered way, and let her own lodgings with her own furniture; nor was she often without friends who would recommend her zeal and honesty, and make excuse for the imperiousness of her ways and the too great fluency of her by no means servile tongue.

'Oh, Mrs. ——,' said Herbert. 'I beg your pardon, but might I ask your name?'

'No offence, sir; none in life. My name's Whereas. Martha Whereas, and 'as been now for five-and-twenty year. There be'ant many of the gen'lemen about the courts here as don't know some'at of me. And I knew some'at of them too, before they carried their wigs so grandly. My husband, that's Whereas,—you'll all'ays find him at the little stationer's shop outside the gate in Carey Street. You'll know him some of these days, I'll go bail, if you're going to Mr. Die; anyways you'll know his handwrite. Tea to your liking, sir? I all'ays gets cream for gentlemen, sir, unless they tells me not. Milk a 'alfpenny, sir;

cream tuppence; three 'alfpence difference; hain't it, sir? So now you can do as you pleases, and if you like bacon and heggs to your breakfastesses you've only to say the words. But then the heggs hain't heggs, that's the truth; and they hain't chickens, but some'at betwixt the two.'

And so she went on during the whole time that he was eating, moving about from place to place, and putting back into the places which she had chosen for them anything which he had chanced to move; now dusting a bit of furniture with her apron, and then leaning on the back of a chair while she asked him some question as to his habits and future mode of living. She also wore a bonnet, apparently as a customary part of her house costume, and Herbert could not help thinking that she looked very like his Aunt Letty.

But when she had gone and taken the breakfast things with her, then began the tedium of the day. It seemed to him as though he had no means of commencing his life in London until he had been with Mr. Prendergast or Mr. Die. And so new did it all feel to him, so strange and wonderful, that he hardly dared to go out of the house by himself and wander about the premises of the Inn. He was not absolutely a stranger in London, for he had been elected at a club before he had left Oxford, and had been up in town twice, staying on each occasion some few weeks. Had he therefore

been asked about the metropolis some four months since at Castle Richmond, he would have professed that he knew it well. Starting from Pall Mall he could have gone to any of the central theatres, or to the Parks, or to the houses of Parliament, or to the picture galleries in June. But now in that dingy big square he felt himself to be absolutely a stranger; and when he did venture out he watched the corners, in order that he might find his way back without asking questions.

And then he roamed round the squares and about the little courts, and found out where were Stone Buildings,—so called because they are so dull and dead and stony-hearted: and as his courage increased he made his way into one of the courts, and stood up for a while on an uncomfortable narrow step, so that he might watch the proceedings as they went on, and it all seemed to him to be dull and deadly. There was no life and amusement such as he had seen at the Assize Court in county Cork, when he was sworn in as one of the Grand Jury. There the gentlemen in wigs—for on the Munster circuit they do wear wigs, or at any rate did then—laughed and winked and talked together joyously; and when a Roman Catholic fisherman from Berehaven was put into the dock for destroying the boat and nets of a Protestant fisherman from Dingle in county Kerry, who had chanced to come that way, 'not fishing at all, at all,

yer honour, but just souping,' as the Papist prisoner averred with great emphasis, the gentlemen of the robe had gone to the fight with all the animation and courage of Matadors and Picadors in a bull-ring. It was delightful to see the way in which Roman Catholic skill combated Protestant fury, with a substratum below of Irish fun which showed to everybody that it was not all quite in earnest;—that the great O'Fagan and the great Fitzberesford could sit down together afterwards with all the pleasure in life over their modicum of claret in the barristers' room at the Imperial hotel. And then the judge had added to the life of the meeting, helping to bamboozle and make miserable a wretch of a witness who had been caught in the act of seeing the boat smashed with a fragment of rock, and was now, in consequence, being impaled alive by his lordship's assistance.

'What do you say your name is?' demanded his lordship, angrily.

'Rowland Houghton,' said the miserable stray Saxon tourist who had so unfortunately strayed that way on the occasion.

'What?' repeated the judge, whose ears were sharper to such sounds as O'Shaughnessy, Macgillycuddy, and O'Callaghan.

'Rowland Houghton,' said the offender, in his distress; quicker, louder, and perhaps not more distinctly than before.

'What does the man say?' said the judge, turning his head down towards a satellite who sat on a bench beneath his cushion.

The gentleman appealed to pronounced the name for the judge's hearing with a full rolling Irish brogue, that gave great delight through all the court; 'R-rowland Hough-h-ton, me lor-r-d.'

Whereupon his lordship threw up his hands in dismay. 'Oulan Outan!' said he. 'Oulan Outan! I never heard such a name in my life!' And then, having thoroughly impaled the wicked witness, and added materially to the amusement of the day, the judge wrote down the name in his book; and there it is to this day, no doubt, Oulan Outan. And when one thinks of it, it was monstrous that an English witness should go into an Irish law court with such a name as Rowland Houghton.

But here, in the dark dingy court to which Herbert had penetrated in Lincoln's Inn, there was no such life as this. Here, whatever skill there might be, was of a dark subterranean nature, quite unintelligible to any minds but those of experts; and as for fury or fun, there was no spark either of one or of the other. The judge sat back in his seat, a tall, handsome, speechless man, not asleep, for his eye from time to time moved slowly from the dingy barrister who was on his legs to

another dingy barrister who was sitting with his hands in his pockets, and with his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. The gentleman who was in the act of pleading had a huge open paper in his hand, from which he droned forth certain legal quiddities of the dullest and most uninteresting nature. He was in earnest, for there was a perpetual energy in his drone, as a droning bee might drone who was known to drone louder than other drones. But it was a continuous energy supported by perseverance, and not by impulse; and seemed to come of a fixed determination to continue the reading of that paper till all the world should be asleep. A great part of the world around was asleep; but the judge's eye was still open, and one might say that the barrister was resolved to go on till that eye should have become closed in token of his success.

Herbert remained there for an hour, thinking that he might learn something that would be serviceable to him in his coming legal career; but at the end of the hour the same thing was going on,—the judge's eye was still open, and the lawyer's drone was still sounding; and so he came away, having found himself absolutely dozing in the uncomfortable position in which he was standing.

At last the day wore away, and at seven o'clock he found himself in Mr. Prendergast's hall in Bloomsbury Square; and his hat and umbrella were taken away from him by an old servant look-

ing very much like Mr. Prendergast himself;—having about him the same look of the stiffness of years, and the same look also of excellent preservation and care.

'Mr. Prendergast is in the library, sir, if you please,' said the old servant; and so saying he ushered Herbert into the back down-stairs room. It was a spacious, lofty apartment, well fitted up for a library, and furnished for that purpose with exceeding care;—such a room as one does not find in the flashy new houses in the west, where the dining-room and drawing-room occupy all of the house that is visible. But then, how few of those who live in flashy new houses in the west require to have libraries in London!

As he entered the room Mr. Prendergast came forward to meet him, and seemed heartily glad to see him. There was a cordiality about him which Herbert had never recognized at Castle Richmond, and an appearance of enjoyment which had seemed to be almost foreign to the lawyer's nature. Herbert perhaps had not calculated, as he should have done, that Mr. Prendergast's mission in Ireland had not admitted of much enjoyment. Mr. Prendergast had gone there to do a job of work, and that he had done, very thoroughly; but he certainly had not enjoyed himself.

There was time for only few words before the old man again entered the room, announcing dinner;

for he belonged to a fashionable club to which he could still adhere if it so pleased him, and had all his old Oxford comrades to fall back upon if that were of any service to him. But how is a man to walk into his club who yesterday was known as his father's eldest son and the heir to a baronetcy and twelve thousand a year, and who to-day is known as nobody's son and the heir to nothing? Men would feel so much for him and pity him so deeply! That was the worst feature of his present position. He could hardly dare to show himself more than was absolutely necessary till the newness of his tragedy was worn off.

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But he had no work for the present day. He could not at once unpack his portmanteau and begin his law studies on the moment. It was about noon when he had completed the former

hands at an early period of your life. Your history would give you an *éclat* there, if you know what I mean.'

'Oh, yes, perfectly; but I don't want that.'

'No. It is a kind of assistance which in my opinion a man should not desire. In the first place, it does not last. A man so bouyed up is apt to trust to such support, instead of his own steady exertions; and the firmest of friends won't stick to a lawyer long if he can get better law for his money elsewhere.'

'There should be no friendship in such matters, I think.'

'Well, I won't say that. But the friendship should come of the service, not the service of the friendship. Good, hard, steady, and enduring work, —work that does not demand immediate acknowledgment and reward, but that can afford to look forward for its results,—it is that, and that only which in my opinion will insure to a man permanent success.'

'It is hard though for a poor man to work so many years without an income,' said Herbert, thinking of Lady Clara Desmond.

'Not hard if you get the price of your work at last. But you can have your choice. A moderate fixed income can now be had by any barrister early in life,—by any barrister of fair parts and sound acquirements. There are more barristers now

filling salaried places than practising in the courts.'

'But those places are given by favour.'

'No; not so generally,—or if by favour, by that sort of favour which is as likely to come to you as to another. Such places are not given to incompetent young men because their fathers and mothers ask for them. But won't you fill your glass?'

'I am doing very well, thank you.'

'You'll do better if you'll fill your glass, and let me have the bottle back. But you are thinking of the good old historical days when you talk of barristers having to wait for their incomes. There has been a great change in that respect,—for the better, as you of course will think. Now-a-days a man is taken away from his boat-racing and his skittle-ground to be made a judge. A little law and a great fund of physical strength—that is the extent of the demand.' And Mr. Prendergast plainly showed by the tone of his voice that he did not admire the wisdom of this new policy of which he spoke.

'But I suppose a man must work five years before he can earn anything,' said Herbert, still despondingly; for five years is a long time to an expectant lover.

'Fifteen years of unpaid labour used not to be thought too great a price to pay for ultimate

success,' said Mr. Prendergast, almost sighing at the degeneracy of the age. 'But men in those days were ambitious and patient.'

'And now they are ambitious and impatient,' suggested Herbert.

'Covetous and impatient might perhaps be the truer epithets,' said Mr. Prendergast with grim sarcasm.

It is sad for a man to feel, when he knows that he is fast going down the hill of life, that the experience of old age is to be no longer valued nor its wisdom appreciated. The elderly man of this day thinks that he has been robbed of his chance in life. When he was in his full physical vigour he was not old enough for mental success. He was still winning his spurs at forty. But at fifty—so does the world change—he learns that he is past his work. By some unconscious and unlucky leap he has passed from the unripeness of youth to the decay of age, without even knowing what it was to be in his prime. A man should always seize his opportunity; but the changes of the times in which he has lived have never allowed him to have one. There has been no period of flood in his tide which might lead him on to fortune. While he has been waiting patiently for high water the ebb has come upon him. Mr. Prendergast himself had been a successful man, and his regrets, therefore, were philosophical rather than practical. As

for Herbert, he did not look upon the question at all in the same light as his elderly friend, and on the whole was rather exhilarated by the tone of Mr. Prendergast's sarcasm. Perhaps Mr. Prendergast had intended that such should be its effect.

The long evening passed away cosily enough, leaving on Herbert's mind an impression that in choosing to be a barrister he had certainly chosen the noblest walk of life in which a man could earn his bread. Mr. Prendergast did not promise him either fame or fortune, nor did he speak by any means in high enthusiastic language; he said much of the necessity of long hours, of tedious work, of Amaryllis left by herself in the shade, and of Neæra's locks unheeded; but nevertheless he spoke in a manner to arouse the ambition and satisfy the longings of the young man who listened to him. There were much wisdom in what he did, and much benevolence also.

And then at about eleven o'clock, Herbert having sat out the second bottle of claret, betook himself to his bed at the lodgings over the covered way.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE EARL WAS WON.

It was not quite at first that the countess could explain to her son how she now wished that Owen Fitzgerald might become her son-in-law. She had been so steadfast in her opposition to Owen when the earl had last spoken of the matter, and had said so much of the wickedly dissipated life which Owen was leading, that she feared to shock the boy. But by degrees she brought the matter round, speaking of Owen's great good fortune, pointing out how much better he was suited for riches than for poverty, insisting warmly on all his good qualities and high feelings, and then saying at last, as it were without thought, 'Poor Clara! She has been unfortunate, for at one time she loved Owen Fitzgerald much better than she will ever love his cousin Herbert.'

'Do you think so, mother?'

'I am sure of it. The truth is, Patrick, you do not understand your sister; and indeed it is hard to do so. I have also always had an inward fear

that she had now engaged herself to a man whom she did not love. Of course as things were then it was impossible that she should marry Owen; and I was glad to break her off from that feeling. But she never loved Herbert Fitzgerald.'

'Why, she is determined to have him, even now.'

'Ah, yes! That is where you do not understand her. Now, at this special moment, her heart is touched by his misfortune, and she thinks herself bound by her engagement to sacrifice herself with him. But that is not love. She has never loved any one but Owen,—and who can wonder at it? for he is a man made for a woman to love.'

The earl said nothing for a while, but sat balancing himself on the back legs of his chair. And then, as though a new idea had struck him, he exclaimed, 'If I thought that, mother, I would find out what Owen thinks of it himself.'

'Poor Owen!' said the countess. 'There is no doubt as to what he thinks;' and then she left the room, not wishing to carry the conversation any further.

Two days after this, and without any further hint from his mother, he betook himself along the banks of the river to Hap House. In his course thither he never let his horse put a foot upon the road, but kept low down upon the water meadows, leaping over all the fences, as he had so often done

with the man whom he was now going to see. It was here, among these banks, that he had received his earliest lessons in horsemanship, and they had all been given by Owen Fitzgerald. It had been a thousand pities, he had thought, that Owen had been so poor as to make it necessary for them all to discourage that love affair with Clara. He would have been so delighted to welcome Owen as his brother-in-law. And as he strode along over the ground, and landed himself knowingly over the crabbed fences, he began to think how much pleasanter the country would be for him if he had a downright good fellow and crack sportsman as his fast friend at Castle Richmond. Sir Owen Fitzgerald of Castle Richmond! He would be the man to whom he would be delighted to give his sister Clara.

And then he hopped in from one of Owen's fields into a small paddock at the back of Owen's house, and seeing one of the stable-boys about the place, asked him if his master was at home.

'Shure an' he's here thin, yer honour;' and Lord Desmond could hear the boy whispering, 'It's the young lord hisself.' In a moment Owen Fitzgerald was standing by his horse's side. It was the first time that Owen had seen one of the family since the news had been spread abroad concerning his right to the inheritance of Castle Richmond.

'Desmond,' said he, taking the lad's hand with one of his, and putting the other on the animal's neck. 'This is very good of you. I am delighted to see you. I had heard that you were in the country.'

'Yes; I have been home for this week past. But things are all so at sixes and sevens among us all that a fellow can't go and do just what he would like.'

Owen well understood what he meant. 'Indeed they are at sixes and sevens; you may well say that. But get off your horse, old fellow, and come into the house. Why, what a lather of heat the mare's in.'

'Isn't she? it's quite dreadful. That chap of ours has no more idea of condition than I have of —of—of—of an archbishop. I've just trotted along the fields, and put her over a ditch or two, and you see the state she's in. It's a beastly shame.'

'I know of old what your trottings are, Desmond; and what a ditch or two means. You've been at every bank between this and Banteer as though you were going for a steeplechase plate.'

'Upon my honour, Owen—'

'Look here, Patsey. Walk that mare up and down here, between this gate and that post, till the big sweat has all dried on her; and then stick to her with a whisp of straw till she's as soft as silk. Do you hear?'

Patsey said that he did hear; and then Owen, throwing his arm over the earl's shoulder, walked slowly towards the house.

'I can't tell you how glad I am to see you, old boy,' said Owen, pressing his young friend with something almost like an embrace. 'You will hardly believe how long it is since I have seen a face that I cared to look at.'

'Haven't you?' said the young lord, wondering. He knew that Fitzgerald had now become heir to a very large fortune, or rather the possessor of that fortune, and he could not understand why a man who had been so popular while he was poor should be deserted now that he was rich.

'No, indeed, have I not. Things are all at sixes and sevens as you say. Let me see. Donnellan was here when you last saw me; and I was soon tired of him when things became serious.'

'I don't wonder you were tired of him.'

'But, Desmond, how's your mother?'

'Oh, she's very well. These are bad times for poor people like us, you know.'

'And your sister?'

'She's pretty well too, thank you.' And then there was a pause. 'You've had a great change in your fortune since I saw you, have you not?' said the earl, after a minute or two. And there it

occurred to him for the first time, that, having refused his sister to this man when he was poor, he had now come to offer her to him when he was rich. 'Not that that was the reason,' he said to himself. 'But it was impossible then, and now it would be so pleasant.'

'It is a sad history, is it not?' said Owen.

'Very sad,' said the earl, remembering, however, that he had ridden over there with his heart full of joy,—of joy occasioned by that very catastrophe which now, following his friend's words like a parrot, he declared to be so very sad.

And now they were in the dining-room in which Owen usually lived, and were both standing on the rug, as two men always do stand when they first get into a room together. And it was clear to see that neither of them knew how to break at once into the sort of loving, genial talk which each was longing to have with the other. It is so easy to speak when one has little or nothing to say; but often so difficult when there is much that must be said: and the same paradox is equally true of writing.

Then Owen walked away to the window, looking out among the shrubs into which Aby Mollett had been precipitated, as though he could collect his thoughts there; and in a moment or two the earl followed him, and looked out also among the shrubs. 'They killed a fox exactly there the

other day; didn't they?' asked the earl, indicating the spot by a nod of his head.

'Yes, they did.' And then there was another pause. 'I'll tell you what it is, Desmond,' Owen said at last, going back to the rug and speaking with an effort. 'As the people say, "a sight of you is good for sore eyes." There is a positive joy to me in seeing you. It is like a cup of cold water when a man is thirsty. But I cannot put the drink to my lips till I know on what terms we are to meet. When last we saw each other, we were speaking of your sister; and now that we meet again, we must again speak of her. Desmond, all my thoughts are of her; I dream of her at night, and find myself talking to her spirit when I wake in the morning. I have much else that I ought to think of; but I go about thinking of nothing but of her. I am told that she is engaged to my cousin Herbert. Nay, she has told me so herself, and I know that it is so. But if she becomes his wife—any man's wife but mine—I cannot live in this country.'

He had not said one word of that state of things in his life's history of which the country side was so full. He had spoken of Herbert, but he had not alluded to Herbert's fall. He had spoken of such hope as he still might have with reference to Clara Desmond; but he did not make the slightest reference to that change in his fortunes—

in his fortunes, and in those of his rival—which might have so strong a bias on those hopes, and which ought so to have in the minds of all worldly, prudent people. It was to speak of this specially that Lord Desmond had come thither; and then, if opportunity should offer, to lead away the subject to that other one; but now Owen had begun at the wrong end. If called upon to speak about his sister at once, what could the brother say, except that she was engaged to Herbert Fitzgerald?

'Tell me this, Desmond, whom does your sister love?' said Owen, speaking almost fiercely in his earnestness. 'I know so much of you, at any rate, that whatever may be your feelings you will not lie to me,'—thereby communicating to the young lord an accusation, which he very well understood, against the truth of the countess, his mother.

'When I have spoken to her about this she declares that she is engaged to Herbert Fitzgerald.'

'Engaged to him! yes, I know that; I do not doubt that. It has been dinned into my ears now for the last six months till it is impossible to doubt it. And she will marry him too, if no one interferes to prevent it. I do not doubt that either. But, Desmond, that is not the question that I have asked. She did love me; and then she was ordered by her mother to abandon that love,

and to give her heart to another. That in words she has been obedient, I know well; but what I doubt is this,—that she has in truth been able so to chuck her heart about like a shuttlecock. I can only say that I am not able to do it.'

How was the earl to answer him? The very line of argument which Owen's mind was taking was exactly that which the young lord himself desired to promote. He too was desirous that Clara should go back to her first love. He himself thought strongly that Owen was a man more fitted than Herbert for the worshipful adoration of such a girl as his sister Clara. But then he, Desmond, had opposed the match while Owen was poor, and how was he to frame words by which he might encourage it now that Owen was rich?

'I have been so little with her, that I hardly know,' he said. 'But, Owen—'

'Well?'

'It is so difficult for me to talk to you about all this.'

'Is it?'

'Why, yes. You know that I have always liked you—always. No chap was ever such a friend to me as you have been;' and he squeezed Owen's arm with strong boyish love.

'I know all about it,' said Owen.

'Well; then all that happened about Clara.

I was young then, you know,'—he was now sixteen—'and had not thought anything about it. The idea of you and Clara falling in love had never occurred to me. Boys are so blind, you know. But when it did happen—you remember that day, old fellow, when you and I met down at the gate?'

'Remember it!' said Owen. He would remember it, as he thought, when half an eternity should have passed over his head.

'And I told you then what I thought. I don't think I am a particular fellow myself about money and rank and that sort of thing. I am as poor as a church mouse, and so I shall always remain; and for myself I don't care about it. But for one's sister, Owen—you never had a sister, had you?'

'Never,' said Owen, hardly thinking of the question.

'One is obliged to think of such things for her. We should all go to rack and ruin, the whole family of us, box and dice,—as indeed we have pretty well already—if some of us did not begin to look about us. I don't suppose I shall ever marry and have a family. I couldn't afford it, you know. And in that case Clara's son would be Earl of Desmond; or if I died she would be Countess of Desmond in her own right.' And the young lord looked the personification of family prudence.

'I know all that,' said Owen; 'but you do not suppose that I was thinking of it?'

'What; as regards yourself. No; I am sure you never did. But, looking to all that, it would never have done for her to marry a man as poor as you were. It is not a comfortable thing to be a very poor nobleman, I can tell you.'

Owen again remained silent. He wanted to talk the earl over into favouring his views, but he wanted to do so as Owen of Hap House, not as Owen of Castle Richmond. He perceived at once from the tone of the boy's voice, and even from his words, that there was no longer anything to be feared from the brother's opposition; and perceiving this, he thought that the mother's opposition might now perhaps also be removed. But it was quite manifest that this had come from what was supposed to be his altered position. 'A man as poor as you were,' Lord Desmond had said, urging that though now the marriage might be well enough, in those former days it would have been madness. The line of argument was very clear; but as Owen was as poor as ever, and intended to remain so, there was nothing in it to comfort him.

'I cannot say that I, myself, have so much worldly wisdom as you have,' said he at last, with something like a sneer.

'Ah, that is just what I knew you would say. You think that I am coming to you now, and offering to make up matters between you and Cla a because you are rich!'

'But can you make up matters between me and Clara?' said Owen, eagerly.

'Well, I do not know. The countess seems to think it might be so.'

And then again Owen was silent, walking about the room with his hands behind his back. Then after all the one thing of this world which his eye regarded as desirable was within his reach. He had then been right in supposing that that face which had once looked up to his so full of love had been a true reflex of the girl's heart,—that it had indicated to him love which was not changeable. It was true that Clara, having accepted a suitor at her mother's order, might now be allowed to come back to him! As he thought of this, he wondered at the endurance and obedience of a woman's heart which could thus give up all that it held as sacred at the instance of another. But even this, though it was but little flattering to Clara, by no means lessened the transport which he felt. He had had that pride in himself, that he had never ceased to believe that she loved him. Full of that thought, of which he had not dared to speak, he had gone about, gloomily miserable since the news of her engagement with Herbert

had reached him, and now he learned, as he thought with certainty, that his belief had been well grounded. Through all that had passed Clara Desmond did love him still!

But as to this overture of reconciliation that was now made to him; how was he to accept it or reject it? It was made to him because he was believed to be Sir Owen Fitzgerald of Castle Richmond, a baronet of twelve thousand a year, instead of a poor squire, whose wife would have to look narrowly to the kitchen, in order that food in sufficiency might be forthcoming for the parlour. That he would become Sir Owen he thought probable; but that he would be Sir Owen of Hap House and not of Castle Richmond he had firmly resolved. He had thought of this for long hours and hours together, and felt that he could never again be happy were he to put his foot into that house as its owner. Every tenant would scorn him, every servant would hate him, every neighbour would condemn him; but this would be as nothing to his hatred of himself, to his own scorn and his own condemnation. And yet how great was the temptation to him now! If he would consent to call himself master of Castle Richmond, Clara's hand might still be his.

So he thought; but those who know Clara Desmond better than he did will know how false were his hopes. She was hardly the girl to have gone

back to a lover when he was rich, whom she had rejected when he was poor.

'Desmond,' said he, 'come here and sit down;' and both sat leaning on the table together, with their arms touching. 'I understand it all now I think; and remember this, my boy, that whomever I may blame, I do not blame you; that you are true and honest I am sure; and, indeed, there is only one person whom I do blame.' He did not say that this one person was the countess, but the earl knew just as well as though he had been told.

'I understand all this now,' he repeated, 'and before we go any further, I must tell you one thing; I shall never be owner of Castle Richmond.'

'Why, I thought it was all settled!' said the earl, looking up with surprise.

'Nothing at all is settled. To every bargain there must be two parties, and I have never yet become a party to the bargain which shall make me owner of Castle Richmond.'

'But is it not yours of right?'

'I do not know what you call right.'

'Right of inheritance,' said the earl, who, having succeeded to his own rank by the strength of the same right enduring through many ages, looked upon it as the one substantial palladium of the country.

'Look here, old fellow, and I'll tell you my

views about this. Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, when he married that poor lady who is still staying at Castle Richmond, did so in the face of the world with the full assurance that he made her his legal wife. Whether such a case as this ever occurred before I don't know, but I am sure of this that in the eye of God she is his widow. Herbert Fitzgerald was brought up as the heir to all that estate, and I cannot see that he can fairly be robbed of that right because another man has been a villain. The title he cannot have, I suppose, because the law won't give it him; but the property can be made over to him, and as far as I am concerned it shall be made over. No earthly consideration shall induce me to put my hand upon it, for in doing so I should look upon myself as a thief and a scoundrel.'

'And you mean then that Herbert will have it all, just the same as it was before?'

'Just the same as regards the estate.'

'Then why has he gone away?'

'I cannot answer for him. I can only tell you what I shall do. I dare say it may take months before it is all settled. But now, Desmond, you know how I stand; I am Owen Fitzgerald of Hap House, now as I have ever been, that and nothing more,—for as to the handle to my name it is not worth talking about.'

They were still sitting at the table, and now

they both sat silent, not looking at each other, but with their eyes fixed on the wood. Owen had in his hand a pen, which he had taken from the mantelpiece, and unconsciously began to trace signs on the polished surface before him. The earl sat with his forehead leaning on his two hands, thinking what he was to say next. He felt that he himself loved the man better than ever; but when his mother should come to hear all this, what would she say?

'You know it all now, my boy,' said Owen, looking up at last; and as he did so there was an expression about his face to which the young earl thought that he had never seen the like. There was a gleam in his eye which, though not of joy, was so bright; and a smile round his mouth which was so sweet, though full of sadness! 'How can she not love him?' said he to himself, thinking of his sister. 'And now, Desmond, go back to your mother and tell her all. She has sent you here.'

'No, she did not send me,' said the boy, stoutly, —almost angrily; 'she does not even know that I have come.'

'Go back then to your sister.'

'Nor does she know it.'

'Nevertheless, go back to them, and tell them both what I have told you; and tell them this also, that I, Owen Fitzgerald of Hap House, still love her better than all that the world else can

of Castle Richmond, but to Owen of Hap House—and he intended to redeem his pledge if it were possible. He had been so conquered by the nobleness of his friend, that he had forgotten his solicitude for his family and his sister.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TALE OF A TURBOT.

It would have been Owen Fitzgerald's desire to disclaim the inheritance which chance had put in his way in absolute silence, had such a course been possible to him. And, indeed, not being very well conversant with matters of business, he had thought for a while that this might be done—or any rate something not far different from this. To those who had hitherto spoken to him upon the subject, to Mr. Prendergast, Mr. Somers, and his cousin, he had disclaimed the inheritance, and that he had thought would have sufficed. That Sir Thomas should die so quickly after the discovery had not of course been expected by anybody; and much, therefore, had not been thought at the moment of these disclaimers;—neither at the moment, nor indeed afterwards, when Sir Thomas did die.

Even Mr. Somers was prepared to admit that as the game had been given up,—as his branch of the Fitzgeralds, acting under the advice of their

friend and lawyer, admitted that the property must go from them—even he, much as he contested within his own breast the propriety of Mr. Prendergast's decisions, was fain to admit now that it was Owen's business to walk in upon the property. Any words which he may have spoken on the impulse of the moment were empty words. When a man becomes heir to twelve thousand a year, he does not give it up in a freak of benevolence. And, therefore, when Sir Thomas had been dead some four or five weeks, and when Herbert had gone away from the scene which was no longer one of interest to him, it was necessary that something should be done.

During the last two or three days of his life Sir Thomas had executed a new will, in which he admitted that his son was not the heir to his estates, and so disposed of such moneys as it was in his power to leave as he would have done had Herbert been a younger son. Early in his life he himself had added something to the property, some two or three hundred a year, and this, also, he left of course to his own family. Such having been done, there would have been no opposition made to Owen had he immediately claimed the inheritance; but as he made no claim, and took no step whatever,—as he appeared neither by himself, nor by letter, nor by lawyer, nor by agent,—as no rumour ever got about as to what he intended

to do, Mr. Somers found it necessary to write to him. This he did on the day of Herbert's departure, merely asking him, perhaps with scant courtesy, who was his man of business, in order that he, Mr. Somers, as agent to the late proprietor, might confer with him. With but scant courtesy, —for Mr. Somers had made one visit to Hap House since the news had been known, with some intention of ingratiating himself with the future heir; but his tenders had not been graciously received. Mr. Somers was a proud man, and though his position in life depended on the income he received from the Castle Richmond estate, he would not make any further overture. So his letter was somewhat of the shortest, and merely contained the request above named.

Owen's reply was sharp, immediate, and equally short, and was carried back by the messenger from Castle Richmond who had brought the letter, to which it was an answer. It was as follows:—

'Hap House, Thursday morning, two o'clock.'

(There was no other date; and Owen probably was unaware that his letter being written at two P.M. was not written on Thursday morning.)

'Dear Sir,

'I have got no lawyer, and no man of business; nor do I mean to employ any if I can

help it. I intend to make no claim to Mr. Herbert Fitzgerald's property of Castle Richmond; and if it be necessary that I should sign any legal document making over to him any claim that I may have, I am prepared to do so at any moment. As he has got a lawyer, he can get this arranged, and I suppose Mr. Prendergast had better do it.

'I am, dear sir,

'Your faithful servant,

'OWEN FITZGERALD of Hap House.'

And with those four or five lines he thought it would be practicable for him to close the whole affair.

This happened on the day of Herbert's departure, and on the day preceding Lord Desmond's visit to Hap House; so that on the occasion of that visit, Owen looked upon the deed as fully done. He had put it quite beyond his own power to recede now, even had he so wished. And then came the tidings to him,—true tidings as he thought,—that Clara was still within his reach if only he were master of Castle Richmond. That this view of his position did for a moment shake him I will not deny; but it was only for a moment: and then it was that he had looked up at Clara's brother, and bade him go back to his mother and sister, and tell them that Owen of Hap

House was Owen of Hap House still;—that and nothing more. Clara Desmond might be bought at a price which would be too costly even for such a prize as her. It was well for him that he so resolved, for at no price could she have been bought.

Mr. Somers, when he received that letter, was much inclined to doubt whether or no it might not be well to take Owen at his word. After all, what just right had he to the estate? According to the eternal and unalterable laws of right and wrong ought it not to belong to Herbert Fitzgerald? Mr. Somers allowed his wish on this occasion to be father to many thoughts much at variance from that line of thinking which was customary to him as a man of business. In his ordinary moods, law with him was law, and a legal claim a legal claim. Had he been all his life agent to the Hap House property instead of to that of Castle Richmond, a thought so romantic would never have entered his head. He would have scouted a man as nearly a maniac who should suggest to him that his client ought to surrender an undoubted inheritance of twelve thousand a year on a point of feeling. He would have rejected it as a proposed crime, and talked much of the indefeasible rights of the coming heirs of the new heir. He would have been as firm as a rock, and as trenchant as a sword in defence of his patron's claims. But now, having in his hands that short, pithy letter from Owen Fitzgerald, he

could not but look at the matter in a more Christian light. After all was not justice, immutable justice, better than law? And would not the property be enough for both of them? Might not law and justice make a compromise? Let Owen be the baronet, and take a slice of four or five thousand, and add that to Hap House; and then if these things were well arranged, might not Mr. Somers still be agent to them both?

Meditating all this in his newly tuned romantic frame of mind Mr. Somers sat down and wrote a long letter to Mr. Prendergast, enclosing the short letter from Owen, and saying all that he, as a man of business with a new dash of romance, could say on such a subject. This letter, not having slept on the road as Herbert did in Dublin, and having been conveyed with that lightning rapidity for which the British Post-office has ever been remarkable—and especially that portion of it which has reference to the sister island,—was in Mr. Prendergast's pocket when Herbert dined with him. That letter, and another to which we shall have to refer more specially. But so much at variance were Mr. Prendergast's ideas from those entertained by Mr. Somers, that he would not even speak to Herbert on the subject. Perhaps, also, that other more important letter, which, if we live, we shall read at length, might also have had some effect in keeping him silent.

But in truth Mr. Somers' mind, and that of Mr. Prendergast, did not work in harmony on this subject. Judging of the two men together by their usual deeds and ascertained character, we may say that there was much more romance about Mr. Prendergast than there was about Mr. Somers. But then it was a general romance, and not one with an individual object. Or perhaps we may say, without injury to Mr. Somers, that it was a true feeling, and not a false one. Mr. Prendergast, also, was much more anxious for the welfare of Herbert Fitzgerald than that of his cousin; but then he could feel on behalf of the man for whom he was interested that it did not behove him to take a present of an estate from the hands of the true owner.

For more than a week Mr. Somers waited, but got no reply to his letter, and heard nothing from Mr. Prendergast; and during this time he was really puzzled as to what he should do. As regarded himself, he did not know at what moment his income might end, or how long he and his family might be allowed to inhabit the house which he now held: and then he could take no steps as to the tenants; could neither receive money nor pay it away, and was altogether at his wits' ends. Lady Fitzgerald looked to him for counsel in everything, and he did not know how to counsel her. Arrangements were to be made for an

auction in the house as soon as she should be able to move; but would it not be a thousand pities to sell all the furniture if there was a prospect of the family returning? And so he waited for Mr. Prendergast's letter with an uneasy heart and vexation of spirit.

But still he attended the relief committees, and worked at the soup-kitchens attached to the estate, as though he were still the agent to Castle Richmond; and still debated warmly with Father Barney on one side, and Mr. Townsend on the other, on that vexatious question of out-door relief. And now the famine was in full swing; and, strange to say, men had ceased to be uncomfortable about it;—such men, that is, as Mr. Somers and Mr. Townsend. The cutting off of maimed limbs, and wrenching out from their sockets of smashed bones, is by no means shocking to the skilled practitioner. And dying paupers, with 'the drag' in their face—that certain sign of coming death of which I have spoken—no longer struck men to the heart. Like the skilled surgeon, they worked hard enough at what good they could do, and worked the better in that they could treat the cases without express compassion for the individuals that met their eyes. In administering relief one may rob five unseen sufferers of what would keep them in life if one is moved to bestow all that is comfortable on one sufferer that is seen. Was it wise to spend

money in alleviating the last hours of those whose doom was already spoken, which money, if duly used, might save the lives of others not yet so far gone in misery? And so in one sense those who were the best in the county, who worked the hardest for the poor and spent their time most completely among them, became the hardest of heart, and most obdurate in their denials. It was strange to see devoted women neglecting the wants of the dying, so that they might husband their strength and time and means for the wants of those who might still be kept among the living.

At this time there came over to the parish of Drumbarrow a young English clergyman who might be said to be in many respects the very opposite to Mr. Townsend. Two men could hardly be found in the same profession more opposite in their ideas, lives, purposes, and pursuits; —with this similarity, however, that each was a sincere, and on the whole an honest man. The Rev. Mr. Carter was much the junior, being at that time under thirty. He had now visited Ireland with the sole object of working among the poor, and distributing according to his own judgment certain funds which had been collected for this purpose in England.

And indeed there did often exist in England at this time a misapprehension as to Irish wants,

which led to some misuses of the funds which England so liberally sent. It came at that time to be the duty of a certain public officer to inquire into a charge made against a seemingly respectable man in the far west of Ireland, purporting that he had appropriated to his own use a sum of twelve pounds sent to him for the relief of the poor of his parish. It had been sent by three English maiden ladies to the relieving officer of the parish of Kilcoutymorrow, and had come to his hands, he then filling that position. He, so the charge said,—and unfortunately said so with only too much truth,—had put the twelve pounds into his own private pocket. The officer's duty in the matter took him to the chairman of the Relief Committee, a stanch old Roman Catholic gentleman nearly eighty years of age, with a hoary head and white beard, and a Milesian name that had come down to him through centuries of Catholic ancestors;—a man urbane in his manner, of the old school, an Irishman such as one does meet still here and there through the country, but now not often—one who above all things was true to the old religion.

Then the officer of the government told his story to the old Irish gentleman—with many words, for there were all manner of small collateral proofs, to all of which the old Irish gentleman listened with a courtesy and patience which were admirable.

And when the officer of the government had done, the old Irish gentleman thus replied:—

'My neighbour Hobbs,'—such was the culprit's name—'has undoubtedly done this thing. He has certainly spent upon his own uses the generous offering made to our poor parish by those noble-minded ladies, the three Miss Walkers. But he has acted with perfect honesty in the matter.'

'What!' said the government officer, 'robbing the poor, and at such a time as this!'

'No robbery at all, dear sir,' said the good old Irish gentleman, with the blandest of all possible smiles; 'the excellent Miss Walkers sent their money for the Protestant poor of the parish of Kilcoutymorrow, and Mr. Hobbs is the only Protestant within it.' And from the twinkle in the old man's eye, it was clear to see that his triumph consisted in this,—that not only he had but one Protestant in the parish, but that that Protestant should have learned so little from his religion.

But this is an episode. And nowadays no episodes are allowed.

And now Mr. Carter had come over to see that if possible certain English funds were distributed according to the wishes of the generous English hearts by whom they had been sent. For as some English, such as the three Miss Walkers, feared on the one hand that the Babylonish woman so

rampant in Ireland might swallow up their money for Babylonish purposes; so, on the other hand, did others dread that the too stanch Protestantism of the church militant in that country might expend the funds collected for undoubted bodily wants in administering to the supposed wants of the soul. No such faults did, in truth, at that time prevail. The indomitable force of the famine had absolutely knocked down all that; but there had been things done in Ireland, before the famine came upon them, which gave reasonable suspicion for such fears.

Mr. Townsend among others had been very active in soliciting aid from England, and hence had arisen a correspondence between him and Mr. Carter; and now Mr. Carter had arrived at Drumbarrow with a respectable sum to his credit at the provincial bank, and an intense desire to make himself useful in this time of sore need. Mr. Carter was a tall, thin, austere-looking man; one, seemingly, who had macerated himself inwardly and outwardly by hard living. He had a high, narrow forehead, a sparse amount of animal development, thin lips, and a piercing, sharp, gray eye. He was a man, too, of few words, and would have been altogether harsh in his appearance had there not been that in the twinkle of his eye which seemed to say that, in spite of all that his gait said to the contrary, the cockles of his heart might yet be

reached by some play of wit—if only the wit were to his taste.

Mr. Carter was a man of personal means, so that he not only was not dependent on his profession, but was able—as he also was willing—to aid that profession by his liberality. In one thing only was he personally expensive. As to his eating and drinking it was, or might have been for any solicitude of his own, little more than bread and water. As for the comforts of home, he had none, for since his ordination his missions had ever been migrating. But he always dressed with care, and consequently with expense, for careful dressing is ever expensive. He always wore new black gloves, and a very long black coat which never degenerated to rust, black cloth trousers, a high black silk waistcoat, and a new black hat. Everything about him was black except his neck, and that was always scrupulously white.

Mr. Carter was a good man—one may say a very good man—for he gave up himself and his money to carry out high views of charity and religion, in which he was sincere with the sincerity of his whole heart, and from which he looked for no reward save such as the godly ever seek. But yet there was about him too much of the Pharisee. He was greatly inclined to condemn other men, and to think none righteous who differed from him. And now he had come to Ireland with a

certain conviction that the clergy of his own church there were men not to be trusted; that they were mere Irish, and little better in their habits and doctrines than under-bred dissenters. He had been elsewhere in the country before he visited Drumbarrow, and had shown this too plainly; but then Mr. Carter was a very young man, and it is not perhaps fair to expect zeal and discretion also from those who are very young.

Mrs. Townsend had heard of him, and was in dismay when she found that he was to stay with them at Drumbarrow parsonage for three days. If Mr. Carter did not like clerical characters of her stamp, neither did she like them of the stamp of Mr. Carter. She had heard of him, of his austerity, of his look, of his habits, and in her heart she believed him to be a Jesuit. Had she possessed full sway herself in the parish of Drumbarrow, no bodies should have been saved at such terrible peril to the souls of the whole parish. But this Mr. Carter came with such recommendation—with such assurances of money given and to be given, of service done and to be done,—that there was no refusing him. And so the husband, more worldly wise than his wife, had invited the Jesuit to his parsonage.

'You'll find, Æneas, he'll have mass in his room in the morning instead of coming to family prayers,' said the wife.

'But what on earth shall we give him for dinner?' said the husband, whose soul at the present moment was among the flesh-pots; and indeed Mrs. Townsend had also turned over that question in her prudent mind.

'He'll not eat meat in Lent, you may be sure,' said Mrs. Townsend, remembering that that was the present period of the year.

'And if he would there is none for him to eat,' said Mr. Townsend, calling to mind the way in which the larder had of late been emptied.

Protestant clergymen in Ireland in those days had very frequently other reasons for fasting than those prescribed by ecclesiastical canons. A well-nurtured lady, the wife of a parish rector in the county Cork, showed me her larder one day about that time. It contained two large loaves of bread, and a pan full of stuff which I should have called paste, but which she called porridge. It was all that she had for herself, her husband, her children, and her charity. Her servants had left her before she came to that pass. And she was a well-nurtured, handsome, educated woman, born to such comforts as you and I enjoy every day,—oh, my reader! perhaps without much giving of thanks for them. Poor lady! the struggle was too much for her, and she died under it.

Mr. Townsend was, as I have said, the very opposite to Mr. Carter, but he also was a man who

could do without the comforts of life, if the comforts of life did not come readily in his way. He liked his glass of whisky punch dearly, and had an idea that it was good for him. Not caring much about personal debts, he would go in debt for whisky. But if the whisky and credit were at an end, the loss did not make him miserable. He was a man with a large appetite, and who took great advantage of a good dinner when it was before him; nay, he would go a long distance to insure a good dinner; but, nevertheless, he would leave himself without the means of getting a mutton chop, and then not be unhappy. Now Mr. Carter would have been very unhappy had he been left without his superfine long black coat.

In tendering his invitation to Mr. Carter, Mr. Townsend had explained that with him the *res angusta domi*, which was always a prevailing disease, had been heightened by the circumstances of the time; but that of such crust and cup as he had, his brother English clergyman would be made most welcome to partake. In answer to this, Mr. Carter had explained that in these days good men thought but little of crusts and cups, and that as regarded himself, nature had so made him that he had but few concupiscences of that sort. And then, all this having been so far explained and settled, Mr. Carter came.

The first day the two clergymen spent together

at Berryhill, and found plenty to employ them. They were now like enough to be in want of funds at that Berryhill soup-kitchen, seeing that the great fount of supplies, the house, namely, of Castle Richmond, would soon have stopped running altogether. And Mr. Carter was ready to provide funds to some moderate extent if all his questions were answered satisfactorily. 'There was to be no making of Protestants,' he said, 'by giving away of soup purchased with his money.' Mr. Townsend thought that this might have been spared him. 'I regret to say,' replied he, with some touch of sarcasm, 'that we have no time for that now.' 'And so better,' said Mr. Carter, with a sarcasm of a blunter sort. 'So better. Let us not clog our alms with impossible conditions which will only create falsehood.' 'Any conditions are out of the question when one has to feed a whole parish,' answered Mr. Townsend.

And then Mr. Carter would teach them how to boil their yellow meal, on which subject he had a theory totally opposite to the practice of the woman employed at the soup-kitchen. 'Av we war to hocus it that, yer riverence,' said Mrs. Daly, turning to Mr. Townsend, 'the crathurs couldn't ate a bit of it; it wouldn't bile at all, at all, not like that.'

'Try it, woman,' said Mr. Carter, when he had uttered his receipt oracularly for the third time.

'Deed an' I won't,' said Mrs. Daly, whose presence there was pretty nearly a labour of love, and who was therefore independent. 'It 'd be a sin an' a shame to spile Christian vittels in them times, an' I won't do it.' And then there was some hard work that day; and though Mr. Townsend kept his temper with his visitor, seeing that he had much to get and nothing to give, he did not on this occasion learn to alter his general opinion of his brethren of the English high church.

And then, when they got home, very hungry after their toil, Mr. Townsend made another apology for the poorness of his table. 'I am almost ashamed,' said he, 'to ask an English gentleman to sit down to such a dinner as Mrs. Townsend will put before you.'

'And indeed then it isn't much,' said Mrs. Townsend; 'just a bit of fish I found going the road.'

'My dear madam, anything will suffice,' said Mr. Carter, somewhat pretentiously. And anything would have sufficed. Had they put before him a mess of that paste of which I have spoken he would have ate it and said nothing,—ate enough of it at least to sustain him till the morrow.

But things had not come to so bad a pass as this at Drumbarrow parsonage; and, indeed, that day fortune had been propitious;—fortune which ever favours the daring. Mrs. Townsend, knowing that

she had really nothing in the house, had sent Jerry to waylay the Lent fishmonger, who twice a week was known to make his way from Kanturk to Mallow with a donkey and panniers; and Jerry had returned with a prize.

And now they sat down to dinner, and lo and behold, to the great surprise of Mr. Carter, and perhaps also to the surprise of the host, a magnificent turbot smoked upon the board. The fins no doubt had been cut off to render possible the insertion of the animal into the largest of the Drumbarrow parsonage kitchen-pots,—an injury against which Mr. Townsend immediately exclaimed angrily. 'My goodness, they have cut off the fins!' said he, holding up both hands in deep dismay. According to his philosophy, if he did have a turbot, why should he not have it with all its perfections about it—fins and all?

'My dear Æneas!' said Mrs. Townsend, looking at him with that agony of domestic distress which all wives so well know how to assume.

Mr. Carter said nothing. He said not a word, but he thought much. This then was their pretended poorness of living! with all their mock humility, these false Irishmen could not resist the opportunity of showing off before the English stranger, and of putting on their table before him a dish which an English dean could afford only on gala days. And then this clergyman, who was so

loudly anxious for the poor, could not repress the sorrow of his heart because the rich delicacy was somewhat marred in the cooking. 'It was too bad,' thought Mr. Carter to himself, 'too bad.'

'None, thank you,' said he, drawing himself up with gloomy reprobation of countenance. 'I will not take any fish, I am much obliged to you.'

Then the face of Mrs. Townsend was one on which neither Christian nor heathen could have looked without horror and grief. What, the man whom in her heart she believed to be a Jesuit, and for whom nevertheless, Jesuit though he was, she had condescended to cater with all her woman's wit!—this man, I say, would not eat fish in Lent! And it was horrible to her warm Irish heart to think that after that fish now upon the table there was nothing to come but two or three square inches of cold bacon. Not eat turbot in Lent! Had he been one of her own sort she might have given him credit for true antagonism to popery; but every inch of his coat gave the lie to such a supposition as that.

'Do take a bit,' said Mr. Townsend, hospitably. 'The fins should not have been cut off, otherwise I never saw a finer fish in my life.'

'None, I am very much obliged to you,' said Mr. Carter, with sternest reprobation of feature.

It was too much for Mrs. Townsend. 'Oh, Æneas,' said she, 'what are we to do?' Mr.

Townsend merely shrugged his shoulders, while he helped himself. His feelings were less acute, perhaps, than those of his wife, and he, no doubt, was much more hungry. Mr. Carter the while sat by, saying nothing, but looking daggers. He also was hungry, but under such circumstances he would rather starve than eat.

'Don't you ever eat fish, Mr. Carter?' said Mr. Townsend, proceeding to help himself for a second time, and poking about round the edges of the delicate creature before him for some relics of the glutinous morsels which he loved so well. He was not, however, enjoying it as he should have done, for seeing that his guest ate none, and that his wife's appetite was thoroughly marred, he was alone in his occupation. No one but a glutton could have feasted well under such circumstances, and Mr. Townsend was not a glutton.

'Thank you, I will eat none to-day,' said Mr. Carter, sitting bolt upright, and fixing his keen gray eyes on the wall opposite.

'Then you may take away, Biddy; I've done with it. But it's a thousand pities such a fish should have been so wasted.'

The female heart of Mrs. Townsend could stand these wrongs no longer, and with a tear in one corner of her eye, and a gleam of anger in the other, she at length thus spoke out. 'I am sure then I don't know what you will eat, Mr. Carter,

and I did think that all you English clergymen always ate fish in Lent,—and indeed nothing else; for indeed people do say that you are much the same as the papists in that respect.'

'Hush, my dear!' said Mr. Townsend.

'Well, but I can't hush when there's nothing for the gentleman to eat.'

'My dear madam, such a matter does not signify in the least,' said Mr. Carter, not unbending an inch.

'But it does signify; it signifies a great deal; and so you'd know if you were a family man;'—'as you ought to be,' Mrs. Townsend would have been delighted to add. 'And I'm sure I sent Jerry five miles, and he was gone four hours to get that bit of fish from Paddy Magrath, as he stops always at Ballygibblin Gate; and indeed I thought myself so lucky, for I only gave Jerry one and sixpence. But they had an uncommon take of fish yesterday at Skibbereen, and—'

'One and sixpence!' said Mr. Carter, now slightly relaxing his brow for the first time.

'I'd have got it for one and three,' said Mr. Townsend, upon whose mind an inkling of the truth was beginning to dawn.

'Indeed and you wouldn't, Æneas; and Jerry was forced to promise the man a glass of whisky the first time he comes this road, which he does sometimes. That fish weighed over nine pounds, every ounce of it.'

'Nine fiddlesticks,' said Mr. Townsend.

'I weighed it myself, Æneas, with my own hands, and it was nine pounds four ounces before we were obliged to cut it, and as firm as a rock the flesh was.'

'For one and sixpence!' said Mr. Carter, relaxing still a little further, and condescending to look his hostess in the face.

'Yes, for one and six; and now—'

'I'm sure I'd have bought it for one and four, fins and all,' said the parson, determined to interrupt his wife in her pathos.

'I'm sure you would not then,' said his wife, taking his assertion in earnest. 'You could never market against Jerry in your life; I will say that for him.'

'If you'll allow me to change my mind, I think I will have a little bit of it,' said Mr. Carter, almost humbly.

'By all means,' said Mr. Townsend. 'Biddy, bring that fish back. Now I think of it, I have not half dined myself yet.'

And then they all three forgot their ill humours, and enjoyed their dinner thoroughly,—in spite of the acknowledged fault as touching the lost fins of the animal.

CHAPTER IX.

CONDEMNED.

I HAVE said that Lord Desmond rode home from Hap House that day in a quieter mood and at a slower pace than that which had brought him thither; and in truth it was so. He had things to think of now much more serious than any that had filled his mind as he had cantered along, joyously hoping that after all he might have for his brother the man that he loved, and the owner of Castle Richmond also. This was now impossible; but he felt that he loved Owen better than ever he had done, and he was pledged to fight Owen's battle, let Owen be ever so poor.

'And what does it signify after all?' he said to himself, as he rode along. 'We shall all be poor together, and then we sha'n't mind it so much; and if I don't marry, Hap House itself will be something to add to the property;' and then he made up his mind that he could be happy enough, living at Desmond Court all his life, so long as he could

have Owen Fitzgerald near him to make life palatable.

That night he spoke to no one on the subject, at least to no one of his own accord. When they were alone his mother asked him where he had been; and when she learned that he had been at Hap House, she questioned him much as to what had passed between him and Owen; but he would tell her nothing, merely saying that Owen had spoken of Clara with his usual ecstasy of love, but declining to go into the subject at any length. The countess, however, gathered from him that he and Owen were on kindly terms together, and so far she felt satisfied.

On the following morning he made up his mind 'to have it out,' as he called it, with Clara; but when the hour came his courage failed him: it was a difficult task—that which he was now to undertake—of explaining to her his wish that she should go back to her old lover, not because he was no longer poor, but, as it were in spite of his poverty, and as a reward to him for consenting to remain poor. As he had thought about it while riding home, it had seemed feasible enough. He would tell her how nobly Owen was going to behave to Herbert, and would put it to her whether, as he intended willingly to abandon the estate, he ought not to be put into possession of the wife. There was a romantic justice about this which he

thought would touch Clara's heart. But on the following morning when he came to think what words he would use for making his little proposition, the picture did not seem to him to be so beautiful. If Clara really loved Herbert—and she had declared that she did twenty times over—it would be absurd to expect her to give him up merely because he wa not a ruined man. But then, which did she love? His mother declared that she loved Owen. 'That's the real question,' said the earl to himself, as on the second morning he made up his mind that he would 'have it out' with Clara without any further delay. He must be true to Owen; that was his first great duty at the present moment.

'Clara, I want to talk to you,' he said, breaking suddenly into the room where she usually sat alone o' mornings. 'I was at Hap House the day before yesterday with Owen Fitzgerald, and to tell you the truth at once, we were talking about you the whole time we were there. And now what I want is, that something should be settled, so that we may all understand one another.'

These words he spoke to her quite abruptly. When he first said that he wished to speak to her, she had got up from her chair to welcome him, for she dearly loved to have him there. There was nothing she liked better than having him to herself when he was in a soft brotherly humour; and then

she would interest herself about his horse, and his dogs, and his gun, and predict his life for him, sending him up as a peer to Parliament, and giving him a noble wife, and promising him that he should be such a Desmond as would redeem all the family from their distresses. But now, as he rapidly brought out his words, she found that on this day her prophecies must regard herself chiefly.

'Surely, Patrick, it is easy enough to understand me,' she said.

'Well, I don't know; I don't in the least mean to find fault with you.'

'I am glad of that, dearest,' she said, laying her hand upon his arm.

'But my mother says one thing, and you another, and Owen another; and I myself, I hardly know what to say.'

'Look here, Patrick, it is simply this: I became engaged to Herbert with my mother's sanction and yours; and now—'

'Stop a moment,' said the impetuous boy, 'and do not pledge yourself to anything till you have heard me. I know that you are cut to the heart about Herbert Fitzgerald losing his property.'

'No, indeed; not at all cut to the heart; that is as regards myself.'

'I don't mean as regards yourself; I mean as regards him. I have heard you say over and

over again that it is a piteous thing that he should be so treated. Have I not?'

'Yes, I have said that, and I think so.'

'And I think that most of your great—great—great love for him, if you will, comes from that sort of feeling.'

'But, Patrick, it came long before.'

'Dear Clara, do listen to me, will you? You may at any rate do as much as that for me.' And then Clara stood perfectly mute, looking into his handsome face as he continued to rattle out his words at her.

'Now if you please, Clara, you may have the means of giving back to him all his property, every shilling that he ever had, or expected to have. Owen Fitzgerald,—who certainly is the finest fellow that ever I came across in all my life, or ever shall, if I live to five hundred,—says that he will make over every acre of Castle Richmond back to his cousin Herbert if—' Oh, my lord, my lord, what a scheme is this you are concocting to entrap your sister! Owen Fitzgerald inserted no 'if,' as you are well aware! 'If,' he continued, with some little qualm of conscience, 'if you will consent to be his wife.'

'Patrick!'

'Listen, now listen. He thinks, and, Clara, by the heavens above me! I think also that you did love him better than you ever loved Herbert Fitz-

gerald.' Clara as she heard these words blushed ruby red up to her very hair, but she said never a word. 'And I think, and he thinks, that you are bound now to Herbert by his misfortunes—that you feel that you cannot desert him because he has fallen so low. By George, Clara, I am proud of you for sticking to him through thick and thin, now that he is down! But the matter will be very difficult if you have the means of giving back to him all that he has lost, as you have. Owen will be poor, but he is a prince among men. By heaven, Clara, if you will only say that he is your choice, Herbert shall have back all Castle Richmond! and I—I shall never marry, and you may give to the man that I love as my brother all that there is left to us of Desmond.'

There was something grand about the lad's eager tone of voice as he made his wild proposal, and something grand also about his heart. He meant what he said, foolish as he was either to mean or to say it. Clara burst into tears, and threw herself into his arms. 'You don't understand,' she said, through her sobs, 'my own, own brother; you do not understand.'

'But, by Jove! I think I do understand. As sure as you are a living girl he will give back Castle Richmond to Herbert Fitzgerald.'

She recovered herself, and leaving her brother's arms, walked away to the window, and from thence

looked down to that path beneath the elms which was the spot in the world which she thought of the oftenest; but as she gazed, there was no lack of loyalty in her heart to the man to whom she was betrothed. It seemed to her as though those childish days had been in another life; as though Owen had been her lover in another world,—a sweet, childish, innocent, happy world which she remembered well, but which was now dissevered from her by an impassable gulf. She thought of his few words of love,—so few that she remembered every word that he had then spoken, and thought of them with a singular mixture of pain and pleasure. And now she heard of his noble self-denial with a thrill which was in no degree enhanced by the fact that she, or even Herbert, was to be the gainer by it. She rejoiced at his nobility, merely because it was a joy to her to know that he was so noble. And yet all through this she was true to Herbert. Another work-a-day world had come upon her in her womanhood, and as that came she had learned to love a man of another stamp, with a love that was quieter, more subdued, and perhaps, as she thought, more enduring. Whatever might be Herbert's lot in life, that lot she would share. Her love for Owen should never be more to her than a dream.

'Did he send you to me?' she said at last, without turning her face away from the window.

'Yes, then, he did; he did send me to you, and he told me to say that as Owen of Hap House he loved you still. And I, I promised to do his bidding; and I promised, moreover, that as far as my good word could go with you, he should have it. And now you know it all; if you care for my pleasure in the matter you will take Owen, and let Herbert have his property. By Jove! if he is treated in that way he cannot complain.'

'Patrick,' said she, returning to him and again laying her hand on him. 'You must now take my message also. You must go to him and bid him come here that I may see him.'

'Who? Owen?'

'Yes, Owen Fitzgerald.'

'Very well, I have no objection in life.' And the earl thought that the difficulty was really about to be overcome. 'And about my mother?'

'I will tell mamma.'

'And what shall I say to Owen?'

'Say nothing to him, but bid him come here. But wait, Patrick; yes; he must not misunderstand me; I can never, never, never marry him.'

'Clara!'

'Never, never; it is impossible. Dear Patrick, I am so sorry to make you unhappy, and I love you so very dearly,—better than ever, I think, for speaking as you do now. But that can never be. Let him come here, however, and I myself will tell

him all.' At last, disgusted and unhappy though he was, the earl did accept the commission, and again on that afternoon rode across the fields to Hap House.

'I will tell him nothing but that he is to come,' said the earl to himself as he went thither. And he did tell Owen nothing else. Fitzgerald questioned him much, but learned but little from him. 'By heavens, Owen,' he said, 'you must settle the matter between you, for I don't understand it. She has bid me ask you to come to her; and now you must fight your own battle.' Fitzgerald of course said that he would obey, and so Lord Desmond left him.

In the evening Clara told her mother. 'Owen Fitzgerald is to be here to-morrow,' she said.

'Owen Fitzgerald; is he?' said the countess. She hardly knew how to bear herself, or how to interfere so as to assist her own object; or how not to interfere, lest she should mar it.

'Yes, mamma. Patrick saw him the other day, and I think it is better that I should see him also.'

'Very well, my dear. But you must be aware, Clara, that you have been so very—I don't wish to say headstrong exactly—so very *entêtée* about your own affairs, that I hardly know how to speak of them. If your brother is in your confidence I shall be satisfied.'

'He is in my confidence; and so may you be also, mamma, if you please.'

But the countess thought it better not to have any conversation forced upon her at that moment; and so she asked her daughter for no further show of confidence then. It would probably be as well that Owen should come and plead his own cause.

And Owen did come. All that night and on the next morning the poor girl remained alone in a state of terrible doubt. She had sent for her old lover, thinking at the moment that no one could explain to him in language so clear as her own what was her fixed resolve. And she had too been so moved by the splendour of his offer, that she longed to tell him what she thought of it. The grandeur of that offer was enhanced tenfold in her mind by the fact that it had been so framed as to include her in this comparative poverty with which Owen himself was prepared to rest contented. He had known that she was not to be bought by wealth, and had given her credit for a nobility that was akin to his own.

But yet, now that the moment was coming, how was she to talk to him? How was she to speak the words which would rob him of his hope, and tell him that he did not, could not, never could possess that one treasure which he desired more than houses and lands, or station and rank? Alas, alas! If it could have been otherwise! If

it could have been otherwise! She also was in love with poverty;—but at any rate, no one could accuse her now of sacrificing a poor lover for a rich one. Herbert Fitzgerald would be poor enough.

And then he came. They had hitherto met but once since that afternoon, now so long ago—that afternoon to which she looked back as to another former world—and that meeting had been in the very room in which she was now prepared to receive him. But her feelings towards him had been very different then. Then he had almost forced himself upon her, and for months previously she had heard nothing of him but what was evil. He had come complaining loudly, and her heart had been somewhat hardened against him. Now he was there at her bidding, and her heart and very soul were full of tenderness. She rose rapidly, and sat down again, and then again rose as she heard his footsteps; but when he entered the room she was standing in the middle of it.

'Clara,' he said, taking the hand which she mechanically held out, 'I have come here now at your brother's request.'

Her name sounded so sweet upon his lips. No idea occurred to her that she ought to be angry with him for using it. Angry with him! Could it be possible that she should ever be angry with him—that she ever had been so?

'Yes,' she said. 'Patrick said something to

me which made me think that it would be better that we should meet.'

'Well, yes; it is better. If people are honest they had always better say to each other's faces that which they have to say.'

'I mean to be honest, Mr. Fitzgerald.'

'Yes, I am sure you do; and so do I also. And if this is so, why cannot we say each to the other that which we have to say? My tale will be a very short one; but it will be true if it is short.'

'But, Mr. Fitzgerald—'

'Well, Clara?'

'Will you not sit down?' And she herself sat upon the sofa; and he drew a chair for himself near to her; but he was too impetuous to remain seated on it long. During the interview between them he was sometimes standing, and sometimes walking quickly about the room; and then for a moment he would sit down, or lean down over her on the sofa arm.

'But, Mr. Fitzgerald, it is my tale that I wish you to hear.'

'Well; I will listen to it.' But he did not listen; for before she had spoken a dozen words he had interrupted her, and poured out upon her his own wild plans and generous schemes. She, poor girl, had thought to tell him that she loved Herbert, and Herbert only—as a lover. But that if she could love him, him Owen, as a brother and

a friend, that love she would so willingly give him. And then she would have gone on to say how impossible it would have been for Herbert, under any circumstances, to have availed himself of such generosity as that which had been offered. But her eloquence was all cut short in the bud. How could she speak with such a storm of impulse raging before her as that which was now strong within Owen Fitzgerald's bosom?

He interrupted her before she had spoken a dozen words, in order that he might exhibit before her eyes the project with which his bosom was filled. This he did, standing for the most part before her, looking down upon her as she sat beneath him, with her eyes fixed upon the floor, while his were riveted on her down-turned face. She knew it all before—all this that he had to say to her, or she would hardly have understood it from his words, they were so rapid and vehement. And yet they were tender, too; spoken in a loving tone, and containing ever and anon assurances of respect, and a resolve to be guided now and for ever by her wishes,—even though those wishes should be utterly subversive of his happiness.

'And now you know it all,' he said, at last. 'And as for my cousin's property, that is safe enough. No earthly consideration would induce me to put a hand upon that, seeing that by all justice it is his.' But in this she hardly yet quite under-

stood him. 'Let him have what luck he may in other respects, he shall still be master of Castle Richmond. If it were that that you wanted—as I know it is not—that I cannot give you. I cannot tell you with what scorn I should regard myself if I were to take advantage of such an accident as this to rob any man of his estate.'

Her brother had been right, so Clara felt, when he declared that Owen Fitzgerald was the finest fellow that ever he had come across. She made another such declaration within her own heart, only with words that were more natural to her. He was the noblest gentleman whom she had ever heard, or read, or thought.

'But,' continued Owen, 'as I will not interfere with him in that which should be his, neither should he interfere with me in that which should be mine. Clara, the only estate that I claim is your heart.'

And that estate she could not give him. On that at any rate she was fixed. She could not barter herself about from one to the other either as a make-weight or a counterpoise. All his pleading was in vain; all his generosity would fail in securing to him this one reward that he desired. And now she had to tell him so.

'Your brother seems to think,' he continued, 'that you still ——;' but now it was her turn to interrupt him.

'Patrick is mistaken,' she said, with her eyes still fixed upon the ground.

'What. You will tell me, then, that I am utterly indifferent to you?'

'No, no, no; I did not say so.' And now she got up and took hold of his arm, and looked into his face imploringly. 'I did not say so. But, oh, Mr. Fitzgerald, be kind to me, be forbearing with me, be good to me,' and she almost embraced his arm as she appealed to him, with her eyes all swimming with tears.

'Good to you!' he said. And a strong passion came upon him, urging him to throw his arm round her slender body, and press her to his bosom. Good to her! would he not protect her with his life's blood against all the world if she would only come to him? 'Good to you, Clara! Can you not trust me that I will be good to you if you will let me?'

'But not so, Owen.' It was the first time she had ever called him by his name, and she blushed again as she remembered that it was so. 'Not good, as you mean, for now I must trust to another for that goodness. Herbert must be my husband, Owen; but will not you be our friend?'

'Herbert must be your husband!'

'Yes, yes, yes. It is so. Do not look at me in that way, pray do not; what would you have me do? You would not have me false to my

troth, and false to my own heart, because you are generous. Be generous to me—to me also.'

He turned away from her, and walked the whole length of the long room; away and back, before he answered her, and even then, when he had returned to her, he stood looking at her before he spoke. And she now looked full into his face, hoping, but yet fearing; hoping that he might yield to her; and fearing his terrible displeasure should he not yield.

'Clara,' he said; and he spoke solemnly, slowly, and in a mood unlike his own,—'I cannot as yet read your heart clearly; nor do I know whether you can quite so read it yourself.'

'I can, I can,' she answered quickly; 'and you shall know it all—all, if you wish.'

'I want to know but one thing. Whom is it that you love? And, Clara—,' and this he said interrupting her as she was about to speak. 'I do not ask you to whom you are engaged. You have engaged yourself both to him and to me.'

'Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald!'

'I do not blame you; not in the least. But is it not so? as to that I will ask no question, and say nothing; only this, that so far we are equal. But now ask of your own heart, and then answer me. Whom is it then you love?'

'Herbert Fitzgerald,' she said. The words

hardly formed themselves into a whisper, but nevertheless they were audible enough to him.

'Then I have no further business here,' he said, and turned about as though to leave the room.

But she ran forward and stopped him, standing between him and the door. 'Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald, do not leave me like that. Say one word of kindness to me before you go. Tell me that you forgive me for the injury I have done you.'

'Yes, I forgive you.'

'And is that all? Oh, I will love you so, if you will let me;—as your friend, as your sister; you shall be our dearest, best, and nearest friend. You do not know how good he is. Owen, will you not tell me that you will love me as a brother loves?'

'No!' and the sternness of his face was such that it was dreadful to look on it. 'I will tell you nothing that is false.'

'And would that be false?'

'Yes, false as hell! What, sit by at his hearthstone and see you leaning on his bosom! Sleep under his roof while you were in his arms! No, Lady Clara, that would not be possible. That virtue, if it be virtue, I cannot possess.'

'And you must go from me in anger? If you knew what I am suffering you would not speak to me so cruelly.'

'Cruel! I would not wish to be cruel to you; certainly not now, for we shall not meet again; if ever, not for many years. I do not think that I have been cruel to you.'

'Then say one word of kindness before you go!'

'A word of kindness! Well; what shall I say? Every night, as I have lain in my bed, I have said words of kindness to you, since—since—since longer than you will remember; since I first knew you as a child. Do you ever think of the day when you walked with me round by the bridge?'

'It is bootless thinking of that now.'

'Bootless! yes, and words of kindness are bootless. Between you and me, such words should be full of love, or they would have no meaning. What can I say to you that shall be both kind and true?'

'Bid God bless me before you leave me.'

'Well, I will say that. May God bless you, in this world and in the next! And now, Lady Clara Desmond, good-bye!' and he tendered to her his hand.

She took it, and pressed it between both of hers, and looked up into his face, and stood so while the fast tears ran down her face. He must have been more or less than man had he not relented then. 'And Owen,' she said, 'dear Owen, may God in

his mercy bless you also, and make you happy, and give you some one that you can love, and—and—teach you in your heart to forgive the injury I have done you.' And then she stooped down her head and pressed her lips upon the hand which she held within her own.

'Forgive you! Well—I do forgive you. Perhaps it may be right that we should both forgive; though I have not wittingly brought unhappiness upon you. But what there is to be forgiven on my side, I do forgive. And—and I hope that you may be happy.' They were the last words that he spoke; and then leading her back to her seat, he placed her there, and without turning to look at her again, he left the room.

He hurried down into the court, and called for his horse. As he stood there, when his foot was in the stirrup, and his hand on the animal's neck, Lord Desmond came up to him. 'Good-bye, Desmond,' he said. 'It is all over; God knows when you and I may meet again.' And without waiting for a word of reply he rode out under the porch, and putting spurs to his horse, galloped fast across the park. The earl, when he spoke of it afterwards to his mother, said that Owen's face had been as it were a thundercloud.

CHAPTER X.

FOX-HUNTING IN SPINNY LANE.

I THINK it will be acknowledged that Mr. Prendergast had said no word throughout the conversation recorded in a late chapter as having taken place between him and Herbert Fitzgerald over their wine, which could lead Herbert to think it possible that he might yet recover his lost inheritance; but nevertheless during the whole of that evening he held in his pocket a letter, received by him only that afternoon, which did encourage him to think that such an event might at any rate be possible. And, indeed, he held in his pocket two letters, having a tendency to the same effect, but we shall have nothing now to say as to that letter from Mr. Somers of which we have spoken before.

It must be understood that up to this time certain inquiries had been going on with reference to the life of Mr. Matthew Mollett, and that these inquiries were being made by agents employed by Mr. Prendergast. He had found that Mollett's identity with Talbot had been so fully proved as

to make it, in his opinion, absolutely necessary that Herbert and his mother should openly give up Castle Richmond. But, nevertheless, without a hope, and in obedience solely to what he felt that prudence demanded in so momentous a matter, he did prosecute all manner of inquiries;—but prosecuted them altogether in vain. And now, O thou most acute of lawyers, this new twinkling spark of hope has come to thee from a source whence thou least expectedst it!

Quod minime reris Graiâ pandetur ab urbe.

And then, as soon as Herbert was gone from him, crossing one leg over the other as he sat in his easy chair, he took it from his pocket and read it for the third time. The signature at the end of it was very plain and legible, being that of a scholar no less accomplished than Mr. Abraham Mollett. This letter we will have entire, though it was not perhaps as short as it might have been. It ran as follows:—

45 Tabernacle row London
April—1847.

'Respectit Sir—

'In hall them doings about the Fitsjerrals at Carsal Richmon I halways felt the most profound respict for you because you wanted to do the thing as was rite wich was what I halways wanted to myself only coodent becase of the guvnor. "Let the right un win, guvnor," said

I, hover hand hover again; but no, he woodent. And what cood the likes of me do then seeing as ow I was obligated by the forth comanment to honor my father and mother, wich however if it wasent that she was ded leving me a horphand there woodent av been none of this trobbel. If she ad livd Mr. Pindargrasp Ide av been brot hup honest, and thats what I weps for. But she dide and my guvnor why hes been a gitten the rong side of the post hever sins that hunfortunate day. Praps you knows Mr. Pindargrasp what it is to lose a mother in your herly hinfantsey. But I was at the guvnor hovers and hovers agin, but hall of no yuse. "He as stumpt hoff with my missus and now he shall stump hup the reddy." Them was my guvnors hown words halways. Well, Mr. Pindargrasp; what does I do. It warnt no good my talking to him he was for going so confounedly the rong side of the post. But I new as how Appy ouse Fitsjerral was the orse as ort to win. Leestways I thawt I new it, and so you thawt too Mr. Pindargrasp only we was both running the rong cent. But what did I do when I was so confounedly disgusted by my guvnor ankring after the baronnites money wich it wasnt rite nor yet onest. Why I went meself to Appy ouse as you noes Mr. Pindargrasp, and was the first to tel the Appy ouse gent hall about it. But wat dos he do. Hoh, Mr. Pindargrasp, I shal

never forgit that faitel day and only he got me hunewairs by the scruf of the nek Im has good a man as he hevery day of the week. But you was ther Mr. Pindargrasp and noes wat I got for befrindin the Appy ouse side wich was agin the guvnor and he as brot me to the loest pich of distress in the way of rino seein the guvnor as cut of my halowence becase I wint agin his hinterest.

'And now Mr. Pindargrasp I ave a terrible secret to hunraffel wich will put the sadel on the rite orse at last and as I does hall this agin my own guvnor wich of corse I love derely I do hope Mr. Pindargrasp you wont see me haltoogether left in the lerch. A litel something to go on with at furst wood be very agrebbel for indeed Mr. Pindargrasp its uncommon low water with your umbel servant at this presant moment. And now wat I has to say is this—Lady F ts warnt niver my guvnors wife hat all becase why hed a wife alivin has I can pruv and will and shes alivin now number 7 Spinny lane Centbotollfs intheheast. Now I do call that noos worse a Jews high Mr. Pindargrasp and I opes youll see me honestly delt with sein as how I coms forward and tels it hall without any haskin and cood keep it all to miself and no one coodent be the wiser only I chews to do the thing as is rite.

You may fine out hall about it hall at number 7 Spinny lane and I advises you to go there immejat. Missus Mary Swan thats what she calls herself but her richeous name his Mollett—and why not seein who is er usban. So no more at presence but will com foward hany day to pruv hall this agin my guvnor becase he arnt doing the thing as is rite and I looks to you Mr. Pindargrasp to see as I gits someat ansum sein as ow I coms forward agin the Appy ouse gent and for the hother party oos side you is a bakkin.

'I ham respictit Sir

'Your umbel servant to command,

'ABM. MOLLETT.'

I cannot say that Mr. Prendergast believed much of this terribly long epistle when he first received it, or felt himself imbued with any great hope that his old friend's wife might be restored to her name and rank, and his old friend's son to his estate and fortune. But nevertheless he knew that it was worth inquiry. That Aby Mollett had been kicked out of Hap House in a manner that must have been mortifying to his feelings, Mr. Prendergast had himself seen; and that he would, therefore, do anything in his power to injure Owen Fitzgerald, Mr. Prendergast was quite sure. That he was a viler wretch even than his father, Mr. Prendergast suspected,—having been

led to think so by words which had fallen from Sir Thomas, and being further confirmed in that opinion by the letter now in his hand. He was not, therefore, led into any strong opinion that these new tidings were of value. And, indeed, he was prone to disbelieve them, because they ran counter to a conviction which had already been made in his own heart, and had been extensively acted on by him. Nevertheless he resolved that even Aby's letter deserved attention, and that it should receive that attention early on the following morning.

And thus he had sat for the three hours after dinner, chatting comfortably with his young friend, and holding this letter in his pocket. Had he shown it to Herbert, or spoken of it, he would have utterly disturbed the equilibrium of the embryo law student, and rendered his entrance in Mr. Die's chambers absolutely futile. 'Ten will not be too early for you,' he had said. 'Mr. Die is always in his room by that hour.' Herbert had of course declared that ten would not be at all too early for him; and Mr. Prendergast had observed that after leaving Mr. Die's chambers, he himself would go on to the City. He might have said beyond the City, for his intended expedition was to Spinny Lane, at St. Botolph's in the East.

When Herbert was gone he sat musing over his fire with Aby's letter still in his hand. A lawyer

has always a sort of affection for a scoundrel,—such affection as a hunting man has for a fox. He loves to watch the skill and dodges of the animal, to study the wiles by which he lives, and to circumvent them by wiles of his own, still more wily. It is his glory to run the beast down; but then he would not for worlds run him down, except in conformity with certain laws, fixed by old custom for the guidance of men in such sports. And the two-legged vermin is adapted for pursuit as is the fox with four legs. He is an unclean animal, leaving a scent upon his trail, which the nose of your acute law hound can pick up over almost any ground. And the more wily the beast is, the longer he can run, the more trouble he can give in the pursuit, the longer he can stand up before a pack of legal hounds, the better does the forensic sportsman love and value him. There are foxes of so excellent a nature, so keen in their dodges, so perfect in their cunning, so skilful in evasion, that a sportsman cannot find it in his heart to push them to their destruction unless the field be very large so that many eyes are looking on. And the feeling is I think the same with lawyers.

Mr. Prendergast had always felt a tenderness towards the Molletts, father and son,—a tenderness which would by no means have prevented him from sending them both to the halter had that been necessary, and had they put themselves so

far in his power. Much as the sportsman loves the fox, it is a moment to him of keen enjoyment when he puts his heavy boot on the beast's body,—the expectant dogs standing round demanding their prey—and there both beheads and betails him. 'A grand old dog,' he says to those around him. 'I know him well. It was he who took us that day from Poulnarer, through Castlecor, and right away to Drumcollogher.' And then he throws the heavy carcass to the hungry hounds. And so could Mr. Prendergast have delivered up either of the Molletts to be devoured by the dogs of the law; but he did not the less love them tenderly while they were yet running.

And so he sat with the letter in his hand, smiling to think that the father and son had come to grief among themselves; smiling also at the dodge by which, as he thought most probable, Aby Mollett was striving to injure the man who had kicked him, and raise a little money for his own private needs. There was too much earnestness in that prayer for cash to leave Mr. Prendergast in any doubt as to Aby's trust that money would be forthcoming. There must be something in the dodge, or Aby would not have had such trust.

And the lawyer felt that he might, perhaps, be inclined to give some little assistance to poor Aby in the soreness of his needs. Foxes will not do well in any country which is not provided with their

natural food. Rats they eat, and if rats be plentiful it is so far good. But one should not begrudge them occasional geese and turkeys, or even break one's heart if they like a lamb in season. A fox will always run well when he has come far from home seeking his breakfast.

Poor Aby, when he had been so cruelly treated by the 'gent of Appy ouse,' whose side in the family dispute he had latterly been so anxious to take, had remained crouching for some hour or two in Owen's kitchen, absolutely mute. The servants there for a while felt sure that he was dying; but in their master's present mood they did not dare to go near him with any such tidings. And then when the hounds were gone, and the place was again quiet, Aby gradually roused himself, allowed them to wash the blood from his hands and face, to restore him to life by whisky and scraps of food, and gradually got himself into his car, and so back to the Kanturk Hotel, in South Main Street, Cork.

But, alas, his state there was more wretched by far than it had been in the Hap House kitchen. That his father had fled was no more than he expected. Each had known that the other would now play some separate secret game. But not the less did he complain loudly when he heard that 'his guvnor' had not paid the bill, and had left neither money nor message for him. How Fanny

had scorned and upbraided him, and ordered Tom to turn him out of the house 'neck and crop;' how he had squared at Tom, and ultimately had been turned out of the house 'neck and crop,'—whatever that may mean—by Fanny's father, needs not here to be particularly narrated. With much suffering and many privations—such as foxes in their solitary wanderings so often know—he did find his way to London; and did, moreover, by means of such wiles as foxes have, find out something as to his 'guvnor's' whereabouts, and some secrets also as to his 'guvnor' which his 'guvnor' would fain have kept to himself had it been possible. And then, also, he again found for himself a sort of home —or hole rather—in his old original gorse covert of London; somewhere among the Jews we may surmise, from the name of the row from which he dated; and here, setting to work once more with his usual cunning industry,—for your fox is very industrious,—he once more attempted to build up a slender fortune by means of the 'Fitsjerral' family. The grand days in which he could look for the hand of the fair Emmeline were all gone by; but still the property had been too good not to leave something for which he might grasp. Properly worked, by himself alone, as he said to himself, it might still yield him some comfortable returns, especially as he should be able to throw over that 'confouned old guvnor of his.'

He remained at home the whole of the day after his letter was written, indeed for the next three days, thinking that Mr. Prendergast would come to him, or send for him; but Mr. Prendergast did neither the one nor the other. Mr. Prendergast took his advice instead, and putting himself into a Hansom cab, had himself driven to 'Centbotollfs intheheast.'

Spinny Lane, St. Botolph's in the East, when at last it was found, was not exactly the sort of place that Mr. Prendergast had expected. It must be known that he did not allow the cabman to drive him up to the very door indicated, nor even to the lane itself; but contented himself with leaving the cab at St. Botolph's church. The huntsman in looking after his game is as wily as the fox himself. Men do not talk at the covert side—or at any rate they ought not. And they should stand together discreetly at the non-running side. All manner of wiles and silences and discretions are necessary, though too often broken through by the uninstructed,—much to their own discomfort. And so in hunting his fox, Mr. Prendergast did not dash up loudly into the covert, but discreetly left his cab at the church of St. Botolph's.

Spinny Lane, when at last found by intelligence given to him at the baker's,—never in such unknown regions ask a lad in the street, for he invariably will accompany you, talking of your

whereabouts very loudly, so that people stare at you, and ask each other what can possibly be your business in those parts. Spinny Lane, I say, was not the sort of locality that he had expected. He knew the look of the half-protected, half-condemned Alsatias of the present-day rascals, and Spinny Lane did not at all bear their character. It was a street of small new tenements, built, as yet, only on one side of the way, with the pavement only one third finished, and the stones in the road as yet unbroken and untrodden. Of such streets there are thousands now round London. They are to be found in every suburb, creating wonder in all thoughtful minds as to who can be their tens of thousands of occupants. The houses are a little too good for artisans, too small and too silent to be the abode of various lodgers, and too mean for clerks who live on salaries. They are as dull-looking as Lethe itself, dull and silent, dingy and repulsive. But they are not discreditable in appearance, and never have that Mohawk look which by some unknown sympathy in bricks and mortar attaches itself to the residences of professional ruffians.

Number seven he found to be as quiet and decent a house as any in the row, and having inspected it from a little distance he walked up briskly to the door, and rang the bell. He walked up briskly in order that his advance might not be ·n; unless, indeed, as he began to think not

impossible, Aby's statement was altogether a hoax.

'Does a woman named Mrs. Mary Swan live here?' he asked of a decent-looking young woman of some seven or eight and twenty, who opened the door for him. She was decent looking, but poverty stricken and wan with work and care, and with that heaviness about her which perpetual sorrow always gives. Otherwise she would not have been ill featured; and even as it was she was feminine and soft in her gait and manner. 'Does Mrs. Mary Swan live here?' asked Mr. Prendergast in a mild voice.

She at once said Mrs. Mary Swan did live there; but she stood with the door in her hand by no means fully opened, as though she did not wish to ask him to enter; and yet there was nothing in her tone to repel him. Mr. Prendergast at once felt that he was on the right scent, and that it behoved him at any rate to make his way into that house; for if ever a modest-looking daughter was like an immodest-looking father, that young woman was like Mr. Mollett senior.

'Then I will see her, if you please,' said Mr. Prendergast, entering the passage without her invitation. Not that he pushed in with roughness; but she receded before the authority of his tone, and obeyed the command which she read in his eye. The poor young woman hesitated as though

it had been her intention to declare that Mrs. Swan was not within; but if so, she had not strength to carry out her purpose, for in the next moment Mr. Prendergast found himself in the presence of the woman he had come to seek.

'Mrs. Mary Swan?' said Mr. Prendergast, asking a question as to her identity.

'Yes, sir, that is my name,' said a sickly-looking elderly woman, rising from her chair.

The room in which the two had been sitting was very poor; but nevertheless it was neat, and arranged with some attention to appearance. It was not carpeted, but there was a piece of drugget some three yards long spread before the fireplace. The wall had been papered from time to time with scraps of different coloured paper, as opportunity offered. The table on which the work of the two women was lying was very old and somewhat rickety, but it was of mahogany; and Mrs. Mary Swan herself was accommodated with a high-backed arm-chair, which gave some appearance of comfort to her position. It was now spring; but they had a small, very small fire in the small grate, on which a pot had been placed in hopes that it might be induced to boil. All these things did the eye of Mr. Prendergast take in; but the fact which his eye took in with its keenest glance was this,—that on the other side of the fire to that on which sat Mrs. Mary Swan, there was a second arm-chair standing

close over the fender, an ordinary old mahogany chair, in which it was evident that the younger woman had not been sitting. Her place had been close to the table-side, where her needles and thread were still lying. But the arm-chair was placed idly away from any accommodation for work, and had, as Mr. Prendergast thought, been recently filled by some idle person.

The woman who rose from her chair as she declared herself to be Mary Swan was old and sickly looking, but nevertheless there was that about her which was prepossessing. Her face was thin and delicate and pale, and not hard and coarse; her voice was low, as a woman's should be, and her hands were white and small. Her clothes, though very poor, were neat, and worn as a poor lady might have worn them. Though there was in her face an aspect almost of terror as she owned to her name in the stranger's presence, yet there was also about her a certain amount of female dignity, which made Mr. Prendergast feel that it behoved him to treat her not only with gentleness, but also with respect.

'I want to say a few words to you,' said he, 'in consequence of a letter I have received; perhaps you will allow me to sit down for a minute or two.'

'Certainly, sir, certainly. This is my daughter, Mary Swan; do you wish that she should leave

the room, sir?' And Mary Swan, as her mother spoke, got up and prepared to depart quietly.

'By no means, by no means,' said Mr. Prendergast, putting his hand out so as to detain her. 'I would much rather that she should remain, as it may be very likely that she may assist me in my inquiries. You will know who I am, no doubt, when I mention my name; Mr. Mollett will have mentioned me to you—I am Mr. Prendergast.'

'No, sir, he never did,' said Mrs. Swan.

'Oh!' said Mr. Prendergast, having ascertained that Mr. Mollett was at any rate well known at No. 7 Spinny Lane. 'I thought that he might probably have done so. He is at home at present, I believe?'

'Sir?' said Mary Swan senior.

'Your father is at home, I believe?' said Mr. Prendergast, turning to the younger woman.

'Sir?' said Mary Swan junior. It was clear at any rate that the women were not practised liars, for they could not bring themselves on the spur of the moment to deny that he was in the house.

Mr. Prendergast did not wish to be confronted at present with Matthew Mollett. Such a step might or might not be desirable before the termination of the interview; but at the present moment he thought that he might probably learn more from

the two women as they were than he would do if Mollett were with them.

It had been acknowledged to him that Mollett was living in that house, that he was now at home, and also that the younger woman present before him was the child of Mollett and of Mary Swan the elder. That the young woman was older than Herbert Fitzgerald, and that therefore the connection between Mollett and her mother must have been prior to that marriage down in Dorsetshire, he was sure; but then it might still be possible that there had been no marriage between Mollett and Mary Swan. If he could show that they had been man and wife when that child was born, then would his old friend Mr. Die lose his new pupil.

'I have a letter in my pocket, Mrs. Swan, from Abraham Mollett—' Mr. Prendergast commenced, pulling out the letter in question.

'He is nothing to me, sir,' said the woman, almost in a tone of anger. 'I know nothing whatever about him.'

'So I should have supposed from the respectability of your appearance, if I may be allowed to say so.'

'Nothing at all, sir; and as for that, we do try to keep ourselves respectable. But this is a very hard world for some people to live in. It has been very hard to me and this poor girl here.'

'It is a hard world to some people, and to some honest people, too,—which is harder still.'

'We've always tried to be honest,' said Mary Swan the elder.

'I am sure you have; and permit me to say, madam, that you will find it at the last to be the best policy;—at the last, even as far as this world is concerned. But about this letter—I can assure you that I have never thought of identifying you with Abraham Mollett.'

'His mother was dead, sir, before ever I set eyes on him or his father; and though I tried to do my——' and then she stopped herself suddenly. Honesty might be the best policy, but, nevertheless, was it necessary that she should tell everything to this stranger?

'Ah, yes; Abraham's mother was dead before you were married,' said Mr. Prendergast, hunting his fox ever so craftily,—his fox whom he knew to be lying in ambush up stairs. It was of course possible that old Mollett should slip away out of the back door and over a wall. If foxes did not do those sort of things they would not be worth half the attention that is paid to them. But Mr. Prendergast was well on the scent; all that a sportsman wants is good scent. He would rather not have a view till the run comes to its close. 'But,' continued Mr. Prendergast, 'it is necessary that I should say a few words to you about this

letter. Abraham's mother was, I suppose, not exactly an—an educated woman?'

'I never saw her, sir.'

'She died when he was very young?'

'Four years old, sir.'

'And her son hardly seems to have had much education?'

'It was his own fault, sir; I sent him to school when he came to me, though, goodness knows, sir, I was short enough of means of doing so. He had better opportunities than my own daughter there; and though I say it myself, who ought not to say it, she is a good scholar.'

'I'm sure she is,—and a very good young woman too, if I can judge by her appearance. But about this letter. I am afraid your husband has not been so particular in his way of living as he should have been.'

'What could I do, sir? a poor weak woman!'

'Nothing; what you could do, I'm sure you did do.'

'I've always kept a house over my head, though it's very humble, as you see, sir. And he has had a morsel to eat and a cup to drink of when he has come here. It is not often that he has troubled me this many years past.'

'Mother,' said Mary Swan the younger, 'the gentleman won't care to know about, about all that between you and father.'

'Ah, but it is just what I do care to know.'

'But, sir, father perhaps mightn't choose it.'

The obedience of women to men—to those men to whom they are legally bound—is, I think, the most remarkable trait in human nature. Nothing equals it but the instinctive loyalty of a dog. Of course we hear of gray mares, and of garments worn by the wrong persons. Xanthippe doubtless did live, and the character from time to time is repeated; but the rule, I think, is as I have said.

'Mrs. Swan,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'I should think myself dishonest were I to worm your secrets out of you, seeing that you are yourself so truthful and so respectable.' Perhaps it may be thought that Mr. Prendergast was a little late in looking at the matter in this light. 'But it behoves me to learn much of the early history of your husband, who is now living with you here, and whose name, as I take it, is not Swan, but Mollett. Your maiden name probably was Swan?'

'But I was honestly married, sir, in the parish church at Putney, and that young woman was honestly born.'

'I am quite sure of it. I have never doubted it. But as I was saying, I have come here for information about your husband, and I do not like to ask you questions off your guard,'—oh, Mr. Prendergast!—'and therefore I think it right to tell you, that neither I nor those for whom I am

concerned have any wish to bear more heavily than we can help upon your husband, if he will only come forward with willingness to do that which we can make him do either willingly or unwillingly.'

'But what was it about Abraham's letter, sir?'

'Well, it does not so much signify now.'

'It was he sent you here, was it, sir? How has he learned where we are, Mary?' and the poor woman turned to her daughter. 'The truth is, sir, he has never known anything of us for these twenty years; nor we of him. I have not set eyes on him for more than twenty years,—not that I know of. And he never knew me by any other name than Swan, and when he was a child he took me for his aunt.'

'He hasn't known then that you and his father were husband and wife?'

'I have always thought he didn't, sir. But how—'

Then after all the young fox had not been so full of craft as the elder one, thought Mr. Prendergast to himself. But nevertheless, he still liked the old fox best. There are foxes that run so uncommonly short that you can never get a burst after them.

'I suppose, Mrs. Swan,' continued Mr. Prendergast, 'that you have heard the name of Fitzgerald?'

The poor woman sat silent and amazed, but after a moment the daughter answered him. 'My

mother, sir, would rather that you should ask her no questions.'

'But, my good girl, your mother, I suppose, would wish to protect your father, and she would not wish to answer these questions in a court of law.'

'Heaven forbid!' said the poor woman.

'Your father has behaved very badly to an unfortunate lady whose friend I am, and on her behalf I must learn the truth.'

'He has behaved badly, sir, to a great many ladies,' said Mrs. Swan, or Mrs. Mollett as we may now call her.

'You are aware, are you not, that he went through a form of marriage with this lady many years ago?' said Mr. Prendergast, almost severely.

'Let him answer for himself,' said the true wife. 'Mary, go up stairs, and ask your father to come down.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE FOX IN HIS EARTH.

Mary Swan the younger hesitated a moment before she executed her mother's order, not saying anything, but looking doubtfully up into her mother's face. 'Go, my dear,' said the old woman, 'and ask your father to come down. It is no use denying him.'

'None in the least,' said Mr. Prendergast; and then the daughter went.

For ten minutes the lawyer and the old woman sat alone, during which time the ear of the former was keenly alive to any steps that might be heard on the stairs or above head. Not that he would himself have taken any active measures to prevent Mr. Mollett's escape, had such an attempt been made. The woman could be a better witness for him than the man, and there would be no fear of her running. Nevertheless, he was anxious that Mollett should, of his own accord, come into his presence.

'I am sorry to keep you so long waiting, sir,' said Mrs. Swan.

'It does not signify. I can easily understand that your husband should wish to reflect a little before he speaks to me. I can forgive that.'

'And, sir—'

'Well, Mrs. Mollett?'

'Are you going to do anything to punish him, sir? If a poor woman may venture to speak a word, I would beg you on my bended knees to be merciful to him. If you would forgive him now I think he would live honest, and be sorry for what he has done.'

'He has worked terrible evil,' said Mr. Prendergast solemnly. 'Do you know that he has harassed a poor gentleman into his grave?'

'Heaven be merciful to him!' said the poor woman. 'But, sir, was not that his son? Was it not Abraham Mollett who did that? Oh, sir, if you will let a poor wife speak, it is he that has been worse than his father.'

Before Mr. Prendergast had made up his mind how he would answer her, he heard the sound of footsteps slowly descending upon the stairs. They were those of a person who stepped heavily and feebly, and it was still a minute before the door was opened.

'Sir,' said the woman. 'Sir,' and as she spoke she looked eagerly into his face—'Forgive us our

trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. 'We should all remember that, sir.'

'True, Mrs. Mollett, quite true;' and Mr. Prendergast rose from his chair as the door opened.

It will be remembered that Mr. Prendergast and Matthew Mollett had met once before, in the room usually occupied by Sir Thomas Fitzgerald. On that occasion Mr. Mollett had at any rate entered the chamber with some of the prestige of power about him. He had come to Castle Richmond as the man having the whip hand; and though his courage had certainly fallen somewhat before he left it, nevertheless he had not been so beaten down but what he was able to say a word or two for himself. He had been well in health and decent in appearance, and even as he left the room had hardly realized the absolute ruin which had fallen upon him.

But now he looked as though he had realized it with sufficient clearness. He was lean and sick and pale, and seemed to be ten years older than when Mr. Prendergast had last seen him. He was wrapped in an old dressing-gown, and had a night-cap on his head, and coughed violently before he got himself into his chair. It is hard for any tame domestic animal to know through what fire and water a poor fox is driven as it is hunted from hole to hole and covert to covert. It is a wonderful fact, but no less a fact, that no men work so hard and

work for so little pay as scoundrels who strive to live without any work at all, and to feed on the sweat of other men's brows. Poor Matthew Mollett had suffered dire misfortune, had encountered very hard lines, betwixt that day on which he stole away from the Kanturk Hotel in South Main Street, Cork, and that other day on which he presented himself, cold and hungry and almost sick to death, at the door of his wife's house in Spinny Lane, St. Botolph's in the East.

He never showed himself there unless when hard pressed indeed, and then he would skulk in, seeking for shelter and food, and pleading with bated voice his husband right to assistance and comfort. Nor was his plea ever denied him.

On this occasion he had arrived in very bad plight indeed: he had brought away from Cork nothing but what he could carry on his body, and had been forced to pawn what he could pawn in order that he might subsist. And then he had been taken with ague, and with the fit strong on him had crawled away to Spinny Lane, and had there been nursed by the mother and daughter whom he had ill used, deserted, and betrayed. 'When the devil was sick the devil a monk would be;' and now his wife, credulous as all women are in such matters, believed the devil's protestations. A time may perhaps come when even— — But stop!—or I may chance to tread on the corns

of orthodoxy. What I mean to insinuate is this; that it was on the cards that Mr. Mollett would now at last turn over a new leaf.

'How do you do, Mr. Mollett?' said Mr. Prendergast. 'I am sorry to see you looking so poorly.'

'Yes, sir. I am poorly enough certainly. I have been very ill since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, sir.'

'Ah, yes, that was at Castle Richmond; was it not? Well, you have done the best thing that a man can do; you have come home to your wife and family now that you are ill and require their attendance.'

Mr. Mollett looked up at him with a countenance full of unutterable woe and weakness. What was he to say on such a subject in such a company? There sat his wife and daughter, his veritable wife and true-born daughter, on whom he was now dependent, and in whose hands he lay, as a sick man does lie in the hands of women: could he deny them? And there sat the awful Mr. Prendergast, the representative of all that Fitzgerald interest which he had so wronged, and who up to this morning had at any rate believed the story with which he, Mollett, had pushed his fortunes in county Cork. Could he in his presence acknowledge that Lady Fitzgerald had never been his wife? It must be confessed that he was in a sore plight. And then remember his ague!

'You feel yourself tolerably comfortable, I suppose, now that you are with your wife and daughter,' continued Mr. Prendergast, most inhumanly.

Mr. Mollett continued to look at him so piteously from beneath his nightcap. 'I am better than I was, thank you, sir,' said he.

'There is nothing like the bosom of one's family for restoring one to health; is there, Mrs. Mollett;—or for keeping one in health?'

'I wish you gentlemen would think so,' said she, drily.

'As for me, I never was blessed with a wife. When I am sick I have to trust to hired attendance. In that respect I am not so fortunate as your husband; I am only an old bachelor.'

'Oh, ain't you, sir?' said Mrs. Mollett; 'and perhaps it's best so. It ain't all married people that are the happiest.'

The daughter during this time was sitting intent on her work, not lifting her face from the shirt she was sewing. But an observer might have seen from her forehead and eye that she was not only listening to what was said, but thinking and meditating on the scene before her.

'Well, Mr. Mollett,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'you at any rate are not an old bachelor.' Mr. Mollett still looked piteously at him, but said nothing. It may be thought that in all this Mr. Prendergast

was more cruel than necessary, but it must be remembered that it was incumbent on him to bring the poor wretch before him down absolutely on his marrow-bones. Mollett must be made to confess his sin, and own that this woman before him was his real wife; and the time for mercy had not commenced till that had been done.

And then his daughter spoke, seeing how things were going with him. 'Father,' said she, 'this gentleman has called because he has had a letter from Abraham Mollett; and he was speaking about what Abraham has been doing in Ireland.'

'Oh dear, oh dear!' said poor Mollett. 'The unfortunate young man; that wretched, unfortunate, young man! He will bring me to the grave at last—to the grave at last.'

'Come, Mr. Mollett,' said Mr. Prendergast, now getting up and standing with his back to the fire, 'I do not know that you and I need beat about the bush much longer. I suppose I may speak openly before these ladies as to what has been taking place in county Cork.'

'Sir!' said Mr. Mollett, with a look of deprecation about his mouth that ought to have moved the lawyer's heart.

'I know nothing about it,' said Mrs. Mollett, very stiffly.

'Yes, mother, we do know something about it; and the gentleman may speak out if it so pleases

him. It will be better, father, for you that he should do so.'

'Very well, my dear,' said Mr. Mollett, in the lowest possible voice; 'whatever the gentleman likes—only I do hope—' and he uttered a deep sigh, and gave no further expression to his hopes or wishes.

'I presume, in the first place,' began Mr. Prendergast, 'that this lady here is your legal wife, and this younger lady your legitimate daughter? There is no doubt I take it as to that?'

'Not—any—doubt—in the world, sir,' said the Mrs. Mollett, who claimed to be so de jure. 'I have got my marriage lines to show, sir. Abraham's mother was dead just six months before we came together; and then we were married just six months after that.'

'Well, Mr. Mollett; I suppose you do not wish to contradict that?'

'He can't, sir, whether he wish it or not,' said Mrs. Mollett.

'Could you show me that—that marriage certificate?' asked Mr. Prendergast.

Mrs. Mollett looked rather doubtful as to this. It may be, that much as she trusted in her husband's reform, she did not wish to let him know where she kept this important palladium of her rights.

'It can be forthcoming, sir, whenever it may be

wanted,' said Mary Mollett the younger; and then Mr. Prendergast, seeing what was passing through the minds of the two women, did not press that matter any further.

'But I should be glad to hear from your own lips, Mr. Mollett, that you acknowledge the marriage, which took place at—at Fulham, I think you said, ma'am?'

'At Putney, sir; at Putney parish church, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fourteen.'

'Ah, that was the year before Mr. Mollett went into Dorsetshire.'

'Yes, sir. He didn't stay with me long, not at that time. He went away and left me; and then all that happened, that you know of—down in Dorsetshire, as they told me. And afterwards when he went away on his keeping, leaving Aby behind, I took the child, and said that I was his aunt. There were reasons then; and I feared—— But never mind about that, sir; for anything that I was wrong enough to say then to the contrary, I am his lawful wedded wife, and before my face he won't deny it. And then when he was sore pressed and in trouble he came back to me, and after that Mary here was born; and one other, a boy, who, God rest him, has gone from these troubles. And since that it is not often that he has been with me. But now, now that he is here, you should have pity on us, and give him another chance.'

But still Mr. Mollett had said nothing himself. He sat during all this time, wearily moving his head to and fro, as though the conversation were anything but comfortable to him. And, indeed, it cannot be presumed to have been very pleasant. He moved his head slowly and wearily to and fro; every now and then lifting up one hand weakly, as though deprecating any recurrence to circumstances so decidedly unpleasant. But Mr. Prendergast was determined that he should speak.

'Mr. Mollett,' said he, 'I must beg you to say in so many words, whether the statement of this lady is correct or is incorrect. Do you acknowledge her for your lawful wife?'

'He daren't deny me, sir,' said the woman, who was, perhaps, a little too eager in the matter.

'Father, why don't you behave like a man and speak?' said his daughter, now turning upon him. 'You have done ill to all of us;—to so many; but now—'

'And are you going to turn against me, Mary?' he whined out, almost crying.

'Turn against you! no, I have never done that. But look at mother. Would you let that gentleman think that she is—what I won't name before him? Will you say that I am not your honest-born child? You have done very wickedly, and you must now make what amends is in your power. If you do not answer him here he

will make you answer in some worse place than this.'

'What is it I am to say, sir?' he whined out again.

'Is this lady here your legal wife?'

'Yes, sir,' said the poor man, whimpering.

'And that marriage ceremony which you went through in Dorsetshire with Miss Wainwright was not a legal marriage?'

'I suppose not, sir.'

'You were well aware at the time that you were committing bigamy?'

'Sir!'

'You knew, I say, that you were committing bigamy; that the child whom you were professing to marry would not become your wife through that ceremony. I say that you knew all this at the time? Come, Mr. Mollett, answer me, if you do not wish me to have you dragged out of this by a policeman and taken at once before a magistrate.'

'Oh, sir! be merciful to us; pray be merciful to us,' said Mrs. Mollett, holding up her apron to her eyes.

'Father, why don't you speak out plainly to the gentleman? He will forgive you, if you do that.'

'Am I to criminate myself, sir?' said Mr. Mollett, still in the humblest voice in the world, and hardly above his breath.

After all, this fox had still some running left in

him, Mr. Prendergast thought to himself. He was not even yet so thoroughly beaten but what he had a dodge or two remaining at his service. 'Am I to criminate myself, sir?' he asked, as innocently as a child might ask whether or no she were to stand longer in the corner.

'You may do as you like about that, Mr. Mollett,' said the lawyer; 'I am neither a magistrate nor a policeman; and at the present moment I am not acting even as a lawyer. I am the friend of a family whom you have misused and defrauded most outrageously. You have killed the father of that family—'

'Oh, gracious!' said Mrs. Mollett.

'Yes, madam, he has done so; and nearly broken the heart of that poor lady, and driven her son from the house which is his own. You have done all this in order that you might swindle them out of money for your vile indulgences, while you left your own wife and your own child to starve at home. In the whole course of my life I never came across so mean a scoundrel; and now you chaffer with me as to whether or no you shall criminate yourself! Scoundrel and villain as you are—a double-dyed scoundrel, still there are reasons why I shall not wish to have you gibbeted, as you deserve.'

'Oh, sir, he has done nothing that would come to that!' said the poor wife.

'You had better let the gentleman finish,' said the daughter. 'He doesn't mean that father will be hung.'

'It would be too good for him,' said Mr. Prendergast, who was now absolutely almost out of temper. 'But I do not wish to be his executioner. For the peace of that family which you have so brutally plundered and ill used, I shall remain quiet,—if I can attain my object without a public prosecution. But, remember, that I guarantee nothing to you. For aught I know you may be in gaol before the night is come. All I have to tell you is this, that if by obtaining a confession from you I am able to restore my friends to their property without a prosecution, I shall do so. Now you may answer me or not, as you like.'

'Trust him, father,' said the daughter. 'It will be best for you.'

'But I have told him everything,' said Mollett. 'What more does he want of me?'

'I want you to give your written acknowledgment that when you went through that ceremony of marriage with Miss Wainwright in Dorsetshire, you committed bigamy, and that you knew at that time that you were doing so.'

Mr. Mollett, as a matter of course, gave him the written document, and then Mr. Prendergast took his leave, bowing graciously to the two women

and not deigning to cast his eyes again on the abject wretch who crouched by the fire.

'Don't be hard on a poor creature who has fallen so low,' said Mrs. Mollett as he left the room. But Mary Mollett junior followed him to the door and opened it for him. 'Sir,' she said addressing him with some hesitation as he was preparing to depart.

'Well, Miss Mollett; if I could do anything for you it would gratify me, for I sincerely feel for you,—both for you and for your mother.'

'Thank you sir; I don't know that there is anything you can do for us—except to spare him. The thief on the cross was forgiven, sir.'

'But the thief on the cross repented.'

'And who shall say that he does not repent? You cannot tell of his heart by scripture word, as you can of that other one. But our Lord has taught us that it is good to forgive the worst of sinners. Tell that poor lady to think of this when she remembers him in her prayers.'

'I will, Miss Mollett; indeed, indeed I will;' and then as he left her he gave her his hand in token of respect. And so he walked away out of Spinny Lane.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOBBY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Mr. Prendergast as he walked out of Spinny Lane, and back to St. Botolph's church, and as he returned thence again to Bloomsbury Square in his cab, had a good deal of which to think. In the first place it must be explained that he was not altogether self-satisfied with the manner in which things had gone. That he would have made almost any sacrifice to recover the property for Herbert Fitzgerald, is certainly true; and it is as true that he would have omitted no possible effort to discover all that which he had now discovered, almost without necessity for any effort. But nevertheless he was not altogether pleased; he had made up his mind a month or two ago that Lady Fitzgerald was not the lawful wife of her husband; and had come to this conclusion on, as he still thought, sufficient evidence. But now he was proved to have been wrong; his character for shrewdness and discernment would be damaged, and his great ally and chum Mr. Die, the Chancery barrister,

would be down on him with unmitigated sarcasm. A man who has been right so frequently as Mr. Prendergast, does not like to find that he is ever in the wrong. And then, had his decision not have been sudden, might not the life of that old baronet have been saved?

Mr. Prendergast could not help feeling this in some degree as he drove away to Bloomsbury Square; but nevertheless he had also the feeling of having achieved a great triumph. It was with him as with a man who has made a fortune when he has declared to his friends that he should infallibly be ruined. It piques him to think how wrong he has been in his prophecy; but still it is very pleasant to have made one's fortune.

When he found himself at the top of Chancery Lane in Holborn, he stopped his cab and got out of it. He had by that time made up his mind as to what he would do; so he walked briskly down to Stone Buildings, and nodding to the old clerk, with whom he was very intimate, asked if he could see Mr. Die. It was his second visit to those chambers that morning, seeing that he had been there early in the day, introducing Herbert to his new Gamaliel. 'Yes, Mr. Die is in,' said the clerk, smiling; and so Mr. Prendergast passed on into the well-known dingy temple of the Chancery god himself.

There he remained for full an hour, a message in

the meanwhile having been sent out to Herbert Fitzgerald, begging him not to leave the chambers till he should have seen Mr. Die; 'and your friend Mr. Prendergast is with him,' said the clerk. 'A very nice gentleman is Mr. Prendergast, uncommon clever too; but it seems to me that he never can hold his own when he comes across our Mr. Die.'

At the end of the hour Herbert was summoned into the sanctum, and there he found Mr. Die sitting in his accustomed chair, with his body much bent, nursing the calf of his leg, which was always enveloped in a black, well-fitting close pantaloon, and smiling very blandly. Mr. Prendergast had in his countenance not quite so sweet an aspect. Mr. Die had repeated to him, perhaps once too often, a very well-known motto of his; one by the aid of which he professed to have steered himself safely through the shoals of life—himself and perhaps some others. It was a motto which he would have loved to see inscribed over the great gates of the noble inn to which he belonged; and which, indeed, a few years since might have been inscribed there with much justice. 'Festinâ lentè,' Mr. Die would say to all those who came to him in any sort of hurry. And then when men accused him of being dilatory by premeditation, he would say no, he had always recommended despatch. 'Festinâ,' he would say; 'festinâ' by all means; but 'festinâ lentè.' The doctrine had at any rate

thriven with the teacher, for Mr. Die had amassed a large fortune.

Herbert at once saw that Mr. Prendergast was a little fluttered. Judging from what he had seen of the lawyer in Ireland, he would have said that it was impossible to flutter Mr. Prendergast; but in truth greatness is great only till it encounters greater greatness. Mars and Apollo are terrible and magnificent gods till one is enabled to see them seated at the foot of Jove's great throne. That Apollo, Mr. Prendergast, though greatly in favour with the old Chancery Jupiter, had now been reminded that he had also on this occasion driven his team too fast, and been nearly as indiscreet in his own rash offering.

'We are very sorry to keep you waiting here, Mr. Fitzgerald,' said Mr. Die, giving his hand to the young man without, however, rising from his chair; 'especially sorry, seeing that it is your first day in harness. But your friend Mr. Prendergast thinks it as well that we should talk over together a piece of business which does not seem as yet to be quite settled.'

Herbert of course declared that he had been in no hurry to go away; he was, he said, quite ready to talk over anything; but to his mind at that moment nothing occurred more momentous than the nature of the agreement between himself and Mr. Die. There was an honorarium which it was

presumed Mr. Die would expect, and which Herbert Fitzgerald had ready for the occasion.

'I hardly know how to describe what has taken place this morning since I saw you,' said Mr. Prendergast, whose features told plainly that something more important than the honorarium was now on the tapis.

'What has taken place?' said Herbert, whose mind now flew off to Castle Richmond.

'Gently, gently,' said Mr. Die; 'in the whole course of my legal experience,—and that now has been a very long experience,—I have never come across so,—so singular a family history as this of yours, Mr. Fitzgerald. When our friend Mr. Prendergast here, on his return from Ireland, first told me the whole of it, I was inclined to think that he had formed a right and just decision—'

'There can be no doubt about that,' said Herbert.

'Stop a moment, my dear sir; wait half a moment—a just decision, I say—regarding the evidence of the facts as conclusive. But I was not quite so certain that he might not have been a little —premature perhaps may be too strong a word—a little too assured in taking those facts as proved.'

'But they were proved,' said Herbert.

'I shall always maintain that there was ample ground to induce me to recommend your poor father so to regard them,' said Mr. Prendergast, stoutly. 'You must remember that those men

would instantly have been at work on the other side; indeed, one of them did attempt it.'

'Without any signal success, I believe,' said Mr. Die.

'My father thought you were quite right, Mr. Prendergast,' said Herbert, with a tear forming in his eye; 'and though it may be possible that the affair hurried him to his death, there was no alternative but that he should know the whole.' At this Mr. Prendergast seemed to wince as he sat in his chair. 'And I am sure of this,' continued Herbert, 'that had he been left to the villanies of those two men, his last days would have been much less comfortable than they were. My mother feels that quite as strongly as I do.' And then Mr. Prendergast looked as though he were somewhat reassured.

'It was a difficult crisis in which to act,' said Mr. Prendergast, 'and I can only say that I did so to the best of my poor judgment.'

'It was a difficult crisis in which to act,' said Mr. Die, assenting.

'But why is all this brought up now?' asked Herbert.

'Festinâ lentè,' said Mr. Die; 'lentè, lent è lentè; always lentè. The more haste we make in trying to understand each other, with the less speed shall we arrive at that object.'

'What is it, Mr. Prendergast?' again demanded

Herbert, who was now too greatly excited to care much for the Chancery wisdom of the great barrister. 'Has anything new turned up about—about those Molletts?'

'Yes, Herbert, something has turned up—'

'Remember, Prendergast, that your evidence is again incomplete.'

'Upon my word, sir, I do not think it is: it would be sufficient for any intellectual jury in a Common Law court,' said Mr. Prendergast, who sometimes, behind his back, gave to Mr. Die the surname of Cunctator.

'But juries in Common Law courts are not always intelligent. And you may be sure, Prendergast, that any gentleman taking up the case on the other side would have as much to say for his client as your counsel would have for yours. Remember, you have not even been to Putney yet.'

'Been to Putney!' said Herbert, who was becoming uneasy.

'The onus probandi would lie with them,' said Mr. Prendergast. 'We take possession of that which is our own till it is proved to belong to others.'

'You have already abandoned the possession.'

'No; we have done nothing already: we have taken no legal step; when we believed—'

'Having by your own act put yourself in your

present position, I think you ought to be very careful before you take up another.'

'Certainly we ought to be careful. But I do maintain that we may be too punctilious. As a matter of course I shall go to Putney.'

'To Putney!' said Herbert Fitzgerald.

'Yes, Herbert, and now, if Mr. Die will permit, I will tell you what has happened. On yesterday afternoon, before you came to dine with me, I received that letter. No, that is from your cousin, Owen Fitzgerald. You must see that also by-and-by. It was this one,—from the younger Mollett, the man whom you saw that day in your poor father's room.

Herbert anxiously put out his hand for the letter, but he was again interrupted by Mr. Die. 'I beg your pardon, Mr. Fitzgerald, for a moment. Prendergast, let me see that letter again, will you? And taking hold of it, he proceeded to read it very carefully, still nursing his leg with his left hand, while he held the letter with his right.

'What's it all about?' said Herbert, appealing to Prendergast almost in a whisper.

'Lentè, lentè, lentè, my dear Mr. Fitzgerald,' said Mr. Die, while his eyes were still intent upon the paper. 'If you will take advantage of the experience of gray hairs, and bald heads,'—his own was as bald all round as a big white stone—'you must put up with some of the disadvantages

of a momentary delay. Suppose now, Prendergast, that he is acting in concert with those people in—what do you call the street?'

'In Spinny Lane.'

'Yes; with his father and the two women there.'

'What could they gain by that?'

'Share with him whatever he might be able to get out of you.'

'The man would never accuse himself of bigamy for that. Besides, you should have seen the women, Die.'

'Seen the women! Tsh—tsh—tsh; I have seen enough of them, young and old, to know that a clean apron and a humble tone and a down-turned eye don't always go with a true tongue and an honest heart. Women are now the most successful swindlers of the age! That profession at any rate is not closed against them.'

'You will not find these women to be swindlers; at least I think not.'

'Ah! but we want to be sure, Prendergast;' and then Mr. Die finished the letter, very leisurely, as Herbert thought.

When he had finished it, he folded it up and gave it back to Mr. Prendergast. 'I don't think but what you've a strong primâ facie case; so strong that perhaps you are right to explain the whole matter to our young friend here, who is so deeply concerned in it. But at the same time I should

caution him that the matter is still enveloped in doubt.'

Herbert eagerly put out his hand for the letter. 'You may trust me with it,' said he: 'I am not of a sanguine temperament, nor easily excited; and you may be sure that I will not take it for more than it is worth.' So saying, he at last got hold of the letter, and managed to read it through much more quickly than Mr. Die had done. As he did so he became very red in the face, and too plainly showed that he had made a false boast in speaking of the coolness of his temperament. Indeed, the stakes were so high that it was difficult for a young man to be cool while he was playing the game: he had made up his mind to lose, and to that he had been reconciled; but now again every pulse of his heart and every nerve of his body was disturbed. 'Was never his wife,' he said out loud when he got to that part of the letter. 'His real wife living now in Spinny Lane! Do you believe that Mr. Prendergast?'

'Yes, I do,' said the attorney.

'Lentè, lentè, lentè,' said the barrister, quite oppressed by his friend's unprofessional abruptness.

'But I do believe it,' said Mr. Prendergast: 'you must always understand, Herbert, that this new story may possibly not be true—'

'Quite possible,' said Mr. Die, with something almost approaching to a slight laugh.

'But the evidence is so strong,' continued the other, 'that I do believe it heartily. I have been to that house, and seen the man, old Mollett, and the woman whom I believe to be his wife, and a daughter who lives with them. As far as my poor judgment goes,' and he made a bow of deference towards the barrister, whose face, however, seemed to say, that in his opinion the judgment of his friend Mr. Prendergast did not always go very far —'As far as my poor judgment goes, the women are honest and respectable. The man is as great a villain as there is unhung—unless his son be a greater one; but he is now so driven into a corner, that the truth may be more serviceable to him than a lie.'

'People of that sort are never driven into a corner,' said Mr. Die; 'they may sometimes be crushed to death.'

'Well, I believe the matter is as I tell you. There at any rate is Mollett's assurance that it is so. The woman has been residing in the same place for years, and will come forward at any time to prove that she was married to this man before he ever saw—before he went to Dorsetshire: she has her marriage certificate; and as far as I can learn there is no one able or willing to raise the question against you. Your cousin Owen certainly will not do so.'

'It will hardly do to depend upon that,' said

Mr. Die, with another sneer. 'Twelve thousand a year is a great provocative to litigation.'

'If he does we must fight him; that's all. Of course steps will be taken at once to get together in the proper legal form all evidence of every description which may bear on the subject, so that should the question ever be raised again, the whole matter may be in a nutshell.'

'You'll find it a nutshell very difficult to crack in five-and-twenty years' time,' said Mr. Die.

'And what would you advise me to do?' asked Herbert.

That after all was now the main question, and it was discussed between them for a long time, till the shades of evening came upon them, and the dull dingy chambers became almost dark as they sat there. Mr. Die at first conceived that it would be well that Herbert should still stick to the law. What indeed could be more conducive to salutary equanimity in the mind of a young man so singularly circumstanced, than the study of Blackstone, of Coke, and of Chitty? as long as he remained there, at work in those chambers, amusing himself occasionally with the eloquence of the neighbouring courts, there might be reasonable hope that he would be able to keep his mind equally poised, so that neither success nor failure as regarded his Irish inheritance should affect him injuriously. Thus at least argued Mr. Die. But at this point

Herbert seemed to have views of his own: he said that in the first place he must be with his mother; and then, in the next place, as it was now clear that he was not to throw up Castle Richmond—as it would not now behove him to allow any one else to call himself master there,—it would be his duty to reassume the place of master. 'The onus probandi will now rest with them,' he said, repeating Mr. Prendergast's words; and then he was ultimately successful in persuading even Mr. Die to agree that it would be better for him to go to Ireland than to remain in London, sipping the delicious honey of Chancery buttercups.

'And you will assume the title, I suppose?' said Mr. Die.

'Not at any rate till I get to Castle Richmond,' he said, blushing. He had so completely abandoned all thought of being Sir Herbert Fitzgerald, that he had now almost felt ashamed of saying that he should so far presume as to call himself by that name.

And then he and Mr. Prendergast went away and dined together, leaving Mr. Die to complete his legal work for the day. At this he would often sit till nine or ten, or even eleven in the evening, without any apparent ill results from such effects, and then go home to his dinner and port wine. He was already nearly seventy, and work seemed to have no effect on him. In what Medea's caldron

is it that the great lawyers so cook themselves, that they are able to achieve half an immortality, even while the body still clings to the soul? Mr. Die, though he would talk of his bald head, had no idea of giving way to time. Superannuated! The men who think of superannuation at sixty are those whose lives have been idle, not they who have really buckled themselves to work. It is my opinion that nothing seasons the mind for endurance like hard work. Port wine should perhaps be added.

It was not till Herbert once more found himself alone that he fully realized this new change in his position. He had dined with Mr. Prendergast at that gentleman's club, and had been specially called upon to enjoy himself, drinking as it were to his own restoration in large glasses of some special claret, which Mr. Prendergast assured him was very extraordinary.

'You may be as satisfied as that you are sitting there that that's 34,' said he; 'and I hardly know anywhere else that you'll get it.'

This assertion Herbert was not in the least inclined to dispute. In the first place, he was not quite clear what 34 meant, and then any other number, 32 or 36, would have suited his palate as well. But he drank the 34, and tried to look as though he appreciated it.

'Our wines here are wonderfully cheap,' said

Mr. Prendergast, becoming confidential; 'but nevertheless we have raised the price of that to twelve shillings. We'll have another bottle.'

During all this Herbert could hardly think of his own fate and fortune, though, indeed, he could hardly think of anything else. He was eager to be alone, that he might think, and was nearly broken-hearted when the second bottle of 34 made its appearance. Something, however, was arranged in those intercalary moments between the raising of the glasses. Mr. Prendergast said that he would write both to Owen Fitzgerald and to Mr. Somers; and it was agreed that Herbert should immediately return to Castle Richmond, merely giving his mother time to have notice of his coming.

And then at last he got away, and started by himself for a night walk through the streets of London. It seemed to him now to be a month since he had arrived there; but in truth it was only on the yesterday that he had got out of the train at the Euston Station. He had come up, looking forward to live in London all his life, and now his London life was over,—unless, indeed, those other hopes should come back to him, unless he should appear again, not as a student in Mr. Die's chamber, but as one of the council of the legislature assembled to make laws for the governance of Mr. Die and of others. It was singular

how greatly this episode in his life had humbled him in his own esteem. Six months ago he had thought himself almost too good for Castle Richmond, and had regarded a seat in Parliament as the only place which he could fitly fill without violation to his nature. But now he felt as though he should hardly dare to show himself within the walls of that assembly. He had been so knocked about by circumstances, so rudely toppled from his high place,—he had found it necessary to put himself so completely into the hands of other people, that his self-pride had all left him. That it would in fact return might be held as certain, but the lesson which he had learned would not altogether be thrown away upon him.

At this moment, as I was saying, he felt himself to be completely humbled. A lie spoken by one of the meanest of God's creatures had turned him away from all his pursuits, and broken all his hopes; and now another word from this man was to restore him,—if only that other word should not appear to be the greater lie! and then that there should be such question as to his mother's name and fame—as to the very name by which she should now be called! that it should depend on the amount of infamy of which that wretch had been guilty, whether or no the woman whom in the world he most honoured was entitled to any share of respect from the world around her! That she

was entitled to the respect of all good men, let the truth in these matters be where it might, Herbert knew, and all who heard the story would acknowledge. But respect is of two sorts, and the outer respect of the world cannot be parted with conveniently.

He did acknowledge himself to be a humbled man,—more so than he had ever yet done, or had been like to do, while conscious of the loss which had fallen on him. It was at this moment when he began to perceive that his fortune would return to him, when he became aware that he was knocked about like a shuttlecock from a battledore, that his pride came by its first fall. Mollett was in truth the great man,—the Warwick who was to make and unmake the kings of Castle Richmond. A month ago, and it had pleased Earl Mollett to say that Owen Fitzgerald should reign; but there had been a turn upon the cards, and now he, King Herbert, was to be again installed.

He walked down all alone through St. James's Street, and by Pall Mall and Charing Cross, feeling rather than thinking of all this. Those doubts of Mr. Die did not trouble him much. He fully believed that he should regain his title and property; or rather that he should never lose them. But he thought that he could never show himself about the country again as he had done before all this was known. In spite of his good

fortune he was sad at heart, little conscious of the good that all this would do him.

He went on by the Horse Guards and Treasury Chambers into Parliament Street, and so up to the new Houses of Parliament, and sauntered into Westminster Hall; and there, at the privileged door between the lamps on his left hand, he saw busy men going in and out, some slow and dignified, others hot, hasty, and anxious, and he felt as though the regions to and from which they passed must be far out of his reach. Could he aspire to pass those august lamp-posts, he whose very name depended on what in truth might have been the early doings of a low scoundrel who was now skulking from the law?

And then he went on, and mounting by the public stairs and anterooms found his way to the lobby of the house. There he stood with his back to the ginger-beer stall, moody and melancholy, looking on as men in the crowd pushed forward to speak to members whom they knew; or, as it sometimes appeared, to members whom they did not know. There was somewhat of interest going on in the house, for the throng was thick, and ordinary men sometimes jostled themselves on into the middle of the hall—with impious steps; for on those centre stones none but legislators should presume to stand.

'Stand back, gentlemen, stand back; back a

little, if you please, sir,' said a very courteous but peremptory policeman, so moving the throng that Herbert, who had been behind, in no way anxious for a forward place, or for distinguishing nods from passing members, found himself suddenly in the front rank, in the immediate neighbourhood of a cluster of young senators who were cooling themselves in the lobby after the ardour of the debate.

'It was as pretty a thing as ever I saw in my life,' said one, 'and beautifully ridden.' Surely it must have been the Spring Meeting and not the debate that they were discussing.

'I don't know much about that,' said another, and the voice sounded on Herbert's ears as it might almost be the voice of a brother. 'I know I lost the odds. But I'll have a bottle of soda-water. Hallo, Fitzgerald! Why—;' and then the young member stopped himself, for Herbert Fitzgerald's story was rife about London at this time.

'How do you do, Moulsey?' said Herbert, very glumly, for he did not at all like being recognized. This was Lord Moulsey, the eldest son of the Earl of Hampton Court, who was now member for the River Regions, and had been one of Herbert's most intimate friends at Oxford.

'I did not exactly expect to see you here,' said Lord Moulsey, drawing him apart. 'And upon

my soul I was never so cut up in my life as when I heard all that. Is it true?'

'True! why no;—it was true, but I don't think it is. That is to say—upon my word I don't know. It's all unsettled—Good evening to you. And again nodding his head at his old friend in a very sombre manner, he skulked off and made his way out of Westminster Hall.

'Do you know who that was?' said Lord Moulsey going back to his ally. 'That was young Fitzgerald, the poor fellow who has been done out of his title and all his property. You have heard about his mother, haven't you?'

'Was that young Fitzgerald?' said the other senator, apparently more interested in this subject than he had even been about the pretty riding. 'I wish I'd looked at him. Poor fellow! How does he bear it?'

'Upon my word then, I never saw a fellow so changed in my life. He and I were like brothers, but he would hardly speak to me. Perhaps I ought to have written to him. But he says it's not settled.'

'Oh, that's all gammon. It's settled enough. Why they've given up the place. I heard all about it the other day from Sullivan O'Leary. They are not even making any fight. Sullivan O'Leary says they are the greatest fools in the world.'

'Upon my word I think young Fitzgerald was mad just now. His manner was so very odd.'

'I shouldn't wonder. I know I should go mad if my mother turned out to be somebody else's wife.' And then they both sauntered away.

Herbert was doubly angry with himself as he made his way down into the noble old hall,—angry that he had gone where there was a possibility of his being recognized, and angry also that he had behaved himself with so little presence of mind when he was recognized. He felt that he had been taken aback, that he had been beside himself, and unable to maintain his own dignity; he had run away from his old intimate friend because he had been unable to bear being looked on as the hero of a family tragedy. 'He would go back to Ireland,' he said to himself, 'and he would never leave it again. Perhaps he might teach himself there to endure the eyes and voices of men around him. Nothing at any rate should induce him to come again to London.' And so he went home to bed in a mood by no means so happy as might have been expected from the result of the day's doings. And yet he had been cheerful enough when he went to Mr. Die's chambers in the morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

ANOTHER JOURNEY.

On the following day he did go back to Ireland, stopping a night in Dublin on the road, so that his mother might receive his letter, and that his cousin and Somers might receive those written by Mr. Prendergast. He spent one night in Dublin, and then went on, so that he might arrive at Castle Richmond after dark. In his present mood he dreaded to be seen returning, even by his own people about the place.

At Buttevant he was met by his own car and by Richard, as he had desired; but he found that he was utterly frustrated as to that method of seating himself in his vehicle which he had promised to himself. He was still glum and gloomy enough when the coach stopped, for he had been all alone, thinking over many things—thinking of his father's death and his mother's early life—of all that he had suffered and might yet have to suffer, and above all things dreading the consciousness that men were talking of him and staring at him. In

this mood he was preparing to leave the coach when he found himself approaching near to that Buttevant stage; but he had more to go through at present than he expected.

'There's his honour—Hurrah! God bless his sweet face that's come among us agin this day! Hurrah for Sir Herbert, boys! hurrah! The rail ould Fitzgerald 'll be back agin among us, glory be to God and the Blessed Virgin! Hurrah for Sir Herbert!' and then there was a shout that seemed to be repeated all down the street of Buttevant.

But that was nothing to what was coming. Herbert, when he first heard this, retreated for a moment back into the coach. But there was little use in that. It was necessary that he should descend, and had he not done so he would have been dragged out. He put his foot on the steps, and then found himself seized in the arms of a man outside, and pressed and embraced as though he had been a baby.

'Ugh, ugh, ugh!' exclaimed a voice, the owner of which intended to send forth notes of joy; but so overcome was he by the intensity of his own feelings that he was in nowise able to moderate his voice either for joy or sorrow. 'Ugh, ugh, ugh! Eh! Sir Herbert! but it's I that am proud to see yer honour this day,—wid yer ouwn name, wid yer ouwn name. Glory be to God; oh dear!

oh dear! And I knew the Lord 'd niver forgit us that way, and let the warld go intirely wrong like that. For av you weren't the masther, Sir Herbert, as you are, the Lord presarve you to us, divil a masther 'd iver be able to hould a foot in Castle Richmond, and that's God's ouwn thruth.'

'And that's thrue for you, Richard,' said another, whom Herbert in the confusion could not recognize, though his voice was familiar to him. ''Deed and the boys had it all made out. But what matthers now Sir Herbert's back?'

'And God bless the day and the hour that he came to us!' And then leaving his master's arm and coat to which he had still stuck, he began to busy himself loudly about the travelling gear. 'Coachman, where's Sir Herbert's portmantel? Yes; that's Sir Herbert's hat-box. 'Deed, an' I ought to know it well. And the black bag; yes, that'll be Sir Herbert's, to be sure,' and so on.

Nor was this all. The name seemed to run like wildfire through all the Buttevantians there assembled; and no sound seemed to reach our hero's name but that of Sir Herbert, Sir Herbert. Everybody took hold of him, and kissed his hand, and pulled his skirts, and stroked his face. His hat was knocked off, and put on again amid thousands of blessings. It was nearly dark, and his eyes were dazed by the coach lanterns which were carried about, so that he could hardly

see his friends; but the one sound which was dinned into his ears was that of Sir Herbert, Sir Herbert.

Had he thought about it when starting from Dublin early that morning he would have said that it would have killed him to have heard himself so greeted in the public street, but as it was he found that he got over it very easily. Before he was well seated on his car it may be questioned whether he was not so used to his name, that he would have been startled to hear himself designated as Mr. Fitzgerald. For half a minute he had been wretched, and had felt a disgust at poor Richard which he thought at the moment would be insuperable; but when he was on the car, and the poor fellow came round to tuck the apron in under his feet, he could not help giving him his hand, and fraternizing with him.

'And how is my mother, Richard?'

''Deed then, Sir Herbert, me lady is surprising—very quiet-like; but her leddyship was always that, and as sweet to them as comes nigh her as flowers in May; but sure that's nathural to her leddyship.'

'And, Richard—'

'Yes, Sir Herbert.'

'Was Mr. Owen over at Castle Richmond since I left?'

'Sorrow a foot, Sir Herbert. Nor no one ain't

heard on him, nor seen him. And I will say this on him—'

'Don't say anything against him, Richard.'

'No, surely not, seeing he is yer honour's far-away cousin, Sir Herbert. But what I war going to say warn't agin Mr. Owen at all, at all. For they do say that cart-ropes wouldn't have dragged him to Castle Richmond; and that only yer honour has come back to yer own,—and why not? —there wouldn't have been any masther in Castle Richmond at all, at all. That's what they do say.'

'There's no knowing how it will go yet, Richard.'

''Deed, an' I know how it 'll go very well, Sir Herbert, and so does Mr. Somers, God bless him! 'Twas only this morning he tould me. An', faix, it's he has the right to be glad.'

'He is a very old friend.'

'So is we all ould frinds, an' we're all glad—out of our skins wid gladness, Sir Herbert. 'Deed an' I thought the eend of the warld had come when I heerd it, for my head went round and round and round as I stood in the stable, and only for the fork I had a hould of, I'd have been down among the crathur's legs.'

And then it struck Herbert that as they were going on he heard the footsteps of some one running after the car, always at an equal distance ind them. 'Who's that running, Richard?'

'Sure an' that's just Larry Carson, yer honour's own boy, that minds yer honour's own nag, Sir Herbert. But, faix, I suppose ye'll be having a dozen of 'em now.'

'Stop and take him up; you've room there.'

'Room enough, Sir Herbert, an' yer honour's so good. Here, Larry, yer born fool, Sir Herbert says ye're to get up. He would come over, Sir Herbert, just to say he'd been the first to see yer honour.'

'God—bless—yer honour—Sir Herbert,' exclaimed the poor fellow, out of breath, as he took his seat. It was his voice that Sir Herbert had recognized among the crowd, angry enough at that moment. But in future days it was remembered in Larry Carson's favour, that he had come over to Castle Richmond to see his master, contented to run the whole road back to Castle Richmond behind the car. A better fate, however, was his, for he made one in the triumphal entry up the avenue.

When they got to the lodge it was quite dark—so dark that even Richard, who was experienced in night-driving, declared that a cat could not see. However, they turned in at the great gates without any accident, the accustomed woman coming out to open them.

'An' is his honour there thin?' said the woman; 'and may God bless you, Sir Herbert, and ye're welcome back to yer own; so ye are!'

And then a warm large hand was laid upon his leg, and a warm voice sounded greeting in his ear. 'Herbert, my boy, how are you? This is well, is it not?' It was Mr. Somers who had been waiting there for him at the lodge gate.

Upon the whole he could not but acknowledge to himself that it was well. Mr. Somers got up beside him on the car, so that by this time it was well laden. 'And how does my mother take it?' Herbert asked.

'Very quietly. Your Aunt Letty told me that she had spent most of her time in prayer since she heard it. But Miss Letty seems to think that on your account she is very full of joy.'

'And the girls?'

'Oh! the girls—what girls? Well, they must answer for themselves; I left them about half an hour ago, and now you hear their voices in the porch.'

He did hear the voices in the porch plainly, though he could not distinguish them, as the horse's feet and the car wheels rattled over the gravel. But as the car stopped at the door with somewhat of a crash, he heard Emmeline say, 'There's Herbert,' and then as he got down they all retreated in among the lights in the hall.

'God bless your honour, Sir Herbert. An' it's you that are welcome back this blessed night to

Castle Richmond.' Such and such like were the greetings which met him from twenty different voices as he essayed to enter the house. Every servant and groom about the place was there, and some few of the nearest tenants,—of those who had lived near enough to hear the glad tidings since the morning. A dozen, at any rate, took his hands as he strove to make his way through them, and though he was never quite sure about it, he believed that one or two had kissed him in the dark. At last he found himself in the hall, and even then the first person who got hold of him was Mrs. Jones.

'And so you've come back to us after all, Mr. Herbert—Sir Herbert I should say, begging your pardon, sir; and it's all right about my lady. I never thought to be so happy again, never—never—never.' And then she retreated with her apron up to her eyes, leaving him in the arms of Aunt Letty.

'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Oh! Herbert, my darling boy. I hope this may be a lesson and a warning to you, so that you may flee from the wrath to come.' Aunt Letty, had time been allowed to her, would certainly have shown that the evil had all come from tampering with papistical abominations; and that the returning prosperity of the house of Castle Richmond was

due to Protestant energy and truth. But much time was not allowed to Aunt Letty, as Herbert hurried on after his sisters.

As he had advanced they had retreated, and now he heard them in the drawing-room. He began to be conscious that they were not alone,—that they had some visitor with them, and began to be conscious also who that visitor was. And when he got himself at last into the room, sure enough there were three girls there, two running forward to meet him from the fireplace to which they had retreated, and the other lingering a little in their rear.

'Oh, Herbert!' and 'oh, Herbert!' and then their arms were thrown about his neck, and their warm kisses were on his cheeks—kisses not unmixed with tears; for of course they began to cry immediately that he was with them, though their eyes had been dry enough for the two or three hours before. Their arms were about his neck, and their kisses on his cheeks, I have said,—meaning thereby the arms and kisses of his sisters, for the third young lady still lingered a little in the rear.

'Was it not lucky Clara was here when the news came to us this morning?' said Mary.

'Such difficulty as we have had to get her,' said Emmeline. 'It was to have been her farewell visit to us; but we will have no more farewells now, will we, Clara?'

And now at last he had his arm round her waist, or as near to that position as he was destined to get it on the present occasion. She gave him her hand, and let him hold that fast, and smiled on him through her soft tears, and was gracious to him with her sweet words and pleasant looks; but she would not come forward and kiss him boldly as she had done when last they had met at Desmond Court. He attempted it now; but he could get his lips no nearer to hers than her forehead; and when he tried to hold her she slipped away from him, and he continually found himself in the embraces of his sisters,—which was not the same thing at all. 'Never mind,' he said to himself; 'his day would soon come round.'

'You did not expect to find Clara here, did you?' asked Emmeline.

'I hardly know what I have expected, or not expected, for the last two days. No, certainly, I had no hope of seeing her to-night.'

'I trust I am not in the way,' said Clara.

Whereupon he made another attempt with his arm, but when he thought he had caught his prize, Emmeline was again within his grasp.

'And my mother?' he then said. It must be remembered that he had only yet been in the room for three minutes, though his little efforts have taken longer than that in the telling.

'She is up stairs, and you are to go to her.

But I told her that we should keep you for a quarter of an hour, and you have not been here half that time yet.'

'And how has she borne all this?'

'Why, well on the whole. When first she heard it this morning, which she did before any of us, you know——'

'Oh, yes, I wrote to her.'

'But your letter told her nothing. Mr. Somers came down almost as soon as your letter was here. He had heard also—from Mr. Prendergast, I think it was, and Mr. Prendergast said a great deal more than you did.'

'Well?'

'We thought she was going to be ill at first, for she became so very pale,—flushing up sometimes for half a minute or so; but after an hour or two she became quite calm. She has seen nobody since but us and Aunt Letty.'

'She saw me,' said Clara.

'Oh, yes, you; you are one of us now,—just the same as ourselves, isn't she, Herbert?'

Not exactly the same, Herbert thought. And then he went up stairs to his mother.

This interview I will not attempt to describe. Lady Fitzgerald had become a stricken woman from the first moment that she had heard that that man had returned to life, who in her early girlhood had come to her as a suitor. Nay, this had been

so from the first moment that she had expected his return. And these misfortunes had come upon her so quickly that, though they had not shattered her in body and mind as they had shattered her husband, nevertheless they had told terribly on her heart. The coming of those men, the agony of Sir Thomas, the telling of the story as it had been told to her by Mr. Prendergast, the resolve to abandon everything—even a name by which she might be called, as far as she herself was concerned, the death of her husband, and then the departure of her ruined son, had, one may say, been enough to destroy the spirit of any woman. Her spirit they had not utterly destroyed. Her powers of endurance were great,—and she had endured, still hoping. But as the uttermost malice of adversity had not been able altogether to depress her, so neither did returning prosperity exalt her,—as far she herself was concerned. She rejoiced for her children greatly, thanking God that she had not entailed on them an existence without a name. But for herself, as she now told Herbert, outside life was all over. Her children and the poor she might still have with her, but beyond, nothing in this world;—to them would be confined all her wishes on this side the grave.

But nevertheless she could be warm in her greetings to her son. She could understand that though she were dead to the world he need not be so,—

nor indeed ought to be so. Things that were now all ending with her were but beginning with him. She had no feeling that taught her to think that it was bad for him to be a man of rank and fortune, the head of his family, and the privileged one of his race. It had been perhaps her greatest misery that she, by her doing, had placed him in the terrible position which he had lately been called upon to fill.

'Dearest mother, it did not make me unhappy,' he said, caressing her.

'You bore it like a man, Herbert, as I shall ever remember. But it did make me unhappy,—more unhappy than it should have done, when we remember how very short is our time here below.'

He remained with his mother for more than an hour, and then returned to the drawing-room, where the girls were waiting for him with the tea-things arranged before them.

'I was very nearly coming up to fetch you,' said Mary, 'only that we knew how much mamma must have to say to you.'

'We dined early because we are all so upset,' said Emmeline; 'and Clara must be dying for her tea.'

'And why should Clara die for tea any more than any one else?' asked Lady Clara herself.

I will not venture to say what hour it was before separated for bed. They sat there with their

feet over the fender, talking about things gone and things coming,—and there were so many of such things for them to discuss! Even yet, as one of the girls remarked, Lady Desmond had not heard of the last change, or if she had so heard, had had no time to communicate with her daughter upon the subject.

And then Owen was spoken of with the warmest praise by them all, and Clara explained openly what had been the full tenor of his intended conduct.

'That would have been impossible,' said Herbert.

'But it was not the less noble in him, was it?' said Clara, eagerly. But she did not tell how Owen Fitzgerald had prayed that her love might be given back to him, as his reward for what he wished to do on behalf of his cousin. Now, at least, at this moment it was not told; yet the day did come when all that was described,—a day when Owen in his absence was regarded by them both among the dearest of their friends.

But even on that night Clara resolved that he should have some meed of praise. 'Has he not been noble?' she said, appealing to him who was to be her husband; 'has he not been very noble?'

Herbert, too happy to be jealous, acknowledged that it was so.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING ROUNDERS.

My story is nearly at its close, and all readers will now know how it is to end. Those difficulties raised by Mr. Die were all made to vanish; and though he implored Mr. Prendergast over and over again to go about this business with a moderated eagerness, that gentleman would not consent to let any grass grow under his heels till he had made assurance doubly sure, and had seen Herbert Fitzgerald firmly seated on his throne. All that the women in Spinny Lane had told him was quite true. The register was found in the archives of the parish of Putney, and Mr. Prendergast was able to prove that Mr. Matthew Mollett, now of Spinny Lane, and the Mr. Matthew Mollett then designated as of Newmarket in Cambridgeshire, were one and the same person; therefore Mr. Mollett's marriage with Miss Wainwright was no marriage, and therefore, also, the marriage between Sir Thomas Fitzgerald and that lady was a marriage; all which things will now be plain

to any novel-reading capacity, mean as such capacity may be in respect to legal law.

And I have only further to tell in respect to this part of my story, that the Molletts, both father and son, escaped all punishment for the frauds and villanies related in these pages—except such punishment as these frauds and villanies, acting by their own innate destructive forces and poisons, brought down upon their unfortunate heads. For so allowing them to escape I shall be held by many to have been deficient in sound teaching. 'What!' men will say, 'not punish your evil principle! Allow the prevailing evil genius of your book to escape scot free, without administering any of that condign punishment which it would have been so easy for you to allot to them! Had you not treadmills to your hand, and all manner of new prison disciplines? Should not Matthew have repented in the sackcloth of solitary confinement, and Aby have munched and crunched between his teeth the bitter ashes of prison bread and water? Nay, for such offences as those did you wot of no penal settlements? Were not Portland and Spike Islands gaping for them? Had you no memory of Dartmoor and the Bermudas?'

Gentle readers, no; not in this instance shall Spike Island or the Bermudas be asked to give us their assistance. There is a sackcloth harsher to the skin than that of the penal settlement, and ashes

more bitter in the crunching than convict rations. It would be sad indeed if we thought that those rascals who escape the law escape also the just reward of their rascality. May it not rather be believed that the whole life of the professional rascal is one long wretched punishment, to which, if he could but know it, the rations and comparative innocence of Bermuda would be so preferable? Is he not always rolling the stone of Sysiphus, gyrating on the wheel of Ixion, hankering after the waters of Tantalus, filling the sieves of the daughters of Danaüs? He pours into his sieve stolen corn beyond measure, but no grain will stay there. He lifts to his lips rich cups, but Rhadamanthus the policeman allows him no moment for a draught. The wheel of justice is ever going, while his poor hanging head is in a whirl. The stone which he rolls never perches for a moment at the top of the hill, for the trade which he follows admits of no rest. Have I not said truly that he is hunted like a fox, driven from covert to covert with his poor empty craving belly? prowling about through the wet night, he returns with his prey, and finds that he is shut out from his lair; his bloodshot eye is ever over his shoulder, and his advanced foot is ever ready for a start; he stinks in the nostrils of the hounds of the law, and is hedby a men to be vermin.

One would say that the rascal, if he but knew the

truth, would look forward to Spike Island and the Bermudas with impatience and raptures. The cold, hungry, friendless, solitary doom of unconvicted rascaldom has ever seemed to me to be the most wretched phase of human existence,—that phase of living in which the liver can trust no one, and be trusted by none; in which the heart is ever quailing at the policeman's hat, and the eye ever shrinking from the policeman's gaze. The convict does trust his gaoler, at any rate his master gaoler, and in so doing is not all wretched. It is Bill Sikes before conviction that I have ever pitied. Any man can endure to be hanged; but how can any man have taken that Bill Sikes' walk and have lived through it?

To such punishments will we leave the Molletts, hoping of the elder one, that under the care of those ministering angels in Spinny Lane, his heart may yet be softened; hoping also for the younger one that some ministering angel may be appointed also for his aid. 'Tis a grievous piece of work though, that of a ministering angel to such a soul as his. And now, having seen them so far on their mortal career, we will take our leave of both of them.

Mr. Prendergast's object in sparing them was of course that of saving Lady Fitzgerald from the terrible pain of having her name brought forward at any trial. She never spoke of this, even to

Herbert, allowing those in whom she trusted to manage those things for her without an expression of anxiety on her own part; but she was not the less thankful when she found that no public notice was to be taken of the matter.

Very shortly after Herbert's return to Castle Richmond, it was notified to him that he need have no fear as to his inheritance; and it was so notified with the great additional comfort of an assuring opinion from Mr. Die. He then openly called himself Sir Herbert, took upon himself the property which became his by right of the entail, and issued orders for the preparation of his marriage settlement. During this period he saw Owen Fitzgerald; but he did so in the presence of Mr. Somers, and not a word was then said about Lady Clara Desmond. Both the gentlemen, Herbert and Mr. Somers, cordially thanked the master of Hap House for the way in which he had behaved to the Castle Richmond family, and in reference to the Castle Richmond property during the terrible events of the last two months; but Owen took their thanks somewhat haughtily. He shook hands warmly enough with his cousin, wishing him joy on the arrangement of his affairs, and was at first less distant than usual with Mr. Somers; but when they alluded to his own conduct, and expressed their gratitude, he declared that he had nothing for which thanks were due, and that

he begged it to be understood that he laid claim to no gratitude. Had he acted otherwise, he said, he would have deserved to be kicked out of the presence of all honest men; and to be thanked for the ordinary conduct of a gentleman was almost an insult. This he said looking chiefly at Mr. Somers, and then turning to his cousin, he asked him if he intended to remain in the country.

'Oh, certainly,' said Herbert.

'I shall not,' said Owen; 'and if you know any one who will take a lease of Hap House for ten or twelve years, I shall be glad to find a tenant.'

'And you, where are you going?'

'To Africa in the first instance,' said he; 'there seems to be some good hunting there, and I think that I shall try it.'

The new tidings were not long in reaching Desmond Court, and the countess was all alone when she first heard them. With very great difficulty, taking as it were the bit between her teeth, Clara had managed to get over to Castle Richmond that she might pay a last visit to the Fitzgerald girls. At this time Lady Desmond's mind was in a terribly distracted state. The rumour was rife about the country that Owen had refused to accept the property; and the countess herself had of course been made aware that he had so refused. But she was too keenly awake to the affairs of the world to suppose that such a refusal could continue

long in force; neither, as she knew well, could Herbert accept of that which was offered to him. It might be that for some years to come the property might be unenjoyed; the rich fruit might fall rotten from the wall; but what would that avail to her or to her child? Herbert would still be a nameless man, and could never be master of Castle Richmond.

Nevertheless Clara carried her point, and went over to her friends, leaving the countess all alone. She had now permitted her son to return to Eton, finding that he was powerless to aid her. The young earl was quite willing that his sister should marry Owen Fitzgerald; but he was not willing to use any power of persuasion that he might have, in what his mother considered a useful or legitimate manner. He talked of rewarding Owen for his generosity; but Clara would have nothing to do either with the generosity or with the reward. And so Lady Desmond was left alone, hearing that even Owen, Owen himself, had now given up the quest, and feeling that it was useless to have any further hope. 'She will make her own bed,' the countess said to herself, 'and she must lie on it.'

And then came this rumour that after all Herbert was to be the man. It first reached her ears about the same time that Herbert arrived at his own house, but it did so in such a manner as to make but little impression at the moment. Lady

Desmond had but few gossips, and in a general way heard but little of what was doing in the country. On this occasion the Caleb Balderston of her house came in, making stately bows to his mistress, and with low voice, and eyes wide open, told her what a gossoon running over from Castle Richmond had reported in the kitchen of Desmond Court. 'At any rate, my lady, Mr. Herbert is expected this evening at the house;' and then Caleb Balderston, bowing stately again, left the room. This did not make much impression, but it made some.

And then on the following day Clara wrote to her: this she did after deep consideration and much consultation with her friends. It would be unkind, they argued, to leave Lady Desmond in ignorance on such a subject; and therefore a note was written very guardedly, the joint production of the three, in which, with the expression of many doubts, it was told that perhaps after all Herbert might yet be the man. But even then the countess did not believe it.

But during the next week the rumour became a fact through the country, and everybody knew, even the Countess of Desmond, that all that family history was again changed. Lady Fitzgerald, whom they had all known, was Lady Fitzgerald still, and Herbert was once more on his throne. When rumours thus became a fact, there was no

longer any doubt about the matter. The country-side did not say that, 'perhaps after all so and so would go in such and such a way,' or that 'legal doubts having been entertained, the gentlemen of the long robe were about to do this and that.' By the end of the first week the affair was as surely settled in county Cork as though the line of the Fitzgeralds had never been disturbed; and Sir Herbert was fully seated on his throne.

It was well then for poor Owen that he had never assumed the regalia of royalty: had he done so his fall would have been very dreadful; as it was, not only were all those pangs spared to him, but he achieved at once an immense popularity through the whole country. Everybody called him poor Owen, and declared how well he had behaved. Some expressed almost a regret that his generosity should go unrewarded, and others went so far as to give him his reward: he was to marry Emmeline Fitzgerald, they said at the clubs in Cork, and a considerable slice of the property was destined to give additional charms to the young lady's hand and heart. For a month or so Owen Fitzgerald was the most popular man in the south of Ireland; that is, as far as a man can be popular who never shows himself.

And the countess had to answer her daughter's letter. 'If this be so,' she said, 'of course I shall be well pleased. My anxiety has been only

for your welfare, to further which I have been willing to make any possible sacrifice.' Clara when she read this did not know what sacrifice had been made, nor had the countess thought as she wrote the words what had been the sacrifice to which she had thus alluded, though her heart was ever conscious of it, unconsciously. And the countess sent her love to them all at Castle Richmond. 'She did not fear,' she said, 'that they would misinterpret her. Lady Fitzgerald, she was sure, would perfectly understand that she had endeavoured to do her duty by her child.' It was by no means a bad letter, and, which was better, was in the main a true letter. According to her light she had striven to do her duty, and her conduct was not misjudged, at any rate at Castle Richmond.

'You must not think harshly of mamma,' said Clara to her future mother-in-law.

'Oh no,' said Lady Fitzgerald. 'I certainly do not think harshly of her. In her position I should probably have acted as she has done.' The difference, however, between them was this, that it was all but impossible that Lady Fitzgerald should not sympathize with her children, while it was almost impossible that the Countess of Desmond should do so.

And so Lady Desmond remained all alone at Desmond Court, brooding over the things as they now were. For the present it was better that Clara should remain at Castle Richmond, and

nothing therefore was said of her return on either side. She could not add to her mother's comfort at home, and why should she not remain happy where she was? She was already a Fitzgerald in heart rather than a Desmond; and was it not well that she should be so? If she could love Herbert Fitzgerald, that was well also. Since the day on which he had appeared at Desmond Court, wet and dirty and wretched, with a broken spirit and fortunes as draggled as his dress, he had lost all claim to be a hero in the estimation of Lady Desmond. To her those only were heroes whose pride and spirit were never draggled; and such a hero there still was in her close neighbourhood.

Lady Desmond herself was a woman of a mercenary spirit; so at least it will be said and thought of her. But she was not altogether so, although the two facts were strong against her that she had sold herself for a title, and had been willing to sell her daughter for a fortune. Poverty she herself had endured upon the whole with patience; and though she hated and scorned it from her very soul, she would now have given herself in marriage to a poor man without rank or station,—she, a countess, and the mother of an earl; and that she would have done with all the romantic love of a girl of sixteen, though she was now a woman verging upon forty!

Men and women only know so much of them-

selves and others as circumstances and their destiny have allowed to appear. Had it perchance fallen to thy lot, O my forensic friend, heavy laden with the wisdom of the law, to write tales such as this of mine, how charmingly might not thy characters have come forth upon the canvas—how much more charmingly than I can limn them! While, on the other hand, ignorant as thou now tellest me that I am of the very alphabet of the courts, had thy wig been allotted to me, I might have gathered guineas thick as daisies in summer, while to thee perhaps they come no faster than snowdrops in the early spring. It is all in our destiny. Chance had thrown that terrible earl in the way of the poor girl in her early youth, and she had married him. She had married him, and all idea of love had flown from her heart. All idea of love, but not all the capacity ——as now within this last year or two she had learned, so much to her cost.

Long months had passed since she had first owned this to herself, since she had dared to tell herself that it was possible even for her to begin the world again, and to play the game which women love to play, once at least before they die. She could have worshipped this man, and sat at his feet, and endowed him in her heart with heroism, and given him her soft brown hair to play with when it suited her Hercules to rest from his labours. She could have forgotten her years, and have forgot-

ten too the children who had now grown up to seize the world from beneath her feet—to seize it before she herself had enjoyed it. She could have forgotten all that was past, and have been every whit as young as her own daughter. If only—!

It is so, I believe, with most of us who have begun to turn the hill. I myself could go on to that common that is at this moment before me, and join that game of rounders with the most intense delight. 'By George! you fellow, you've no eyes; didn't you see that he hadn't put his foot in the hole. He'll get back now that long-backed, hard-hitting chap, and your side is done for the next half-hour!' But then they would all be awestruck for a while; and after that, when they grew to be familiar with me, they would laugh at me because I loomed large in my running, and returned to my ground scant of breath. Alas, alas! I know that it would not do. So I pass by, imperious in my heavy manhood, and one of the lads respectfully abstains from me though the ball is under my very feet.

But then I have had my game of rounders. No horrible old earl with gloating eyes carried me off in my childhood and robbed me of the pleasure of my youth. That part of my cake has been eaten, and, in spite of some occasional headache, has been digested not altogether unsatisfactorily. Lady Desmond had as yet been allowed no slice of her cake. She had never yet taken her side in any

game of rounders. But she too had looked on and seen how jocund was the play; she also had acknowledged that that running in the ring, that stout hitting of the ball, that innocent craft, that bringing back by her own skill and with her own hand of some long-backed fellow, would be pleasant to her as well as to others. If only she now could be chosen in at that game! But what if the side that she cared for would not have her?

But *tempus edax rerum*, though it had hardly nibbled at her heart or wishes, had been feeding on the freshness of her brow and the bloom of her lips. The child with whom she would have loved to play kept aloof from her too, and would not pick up the ball when it rolled to his feet. All this, if one thinks of it, is hard to bear. It is very hard to have had no period for rounders, not to be able even to look back to one's games, and to talk of them to one's old comrades! 'But why then did she allow herself to be carried off by the wicked wrinkled earl with the gloating eyes?' asks of me the prettiest girl in the world, just turned eighteen. Oh heavens! Is it not possible that one should have one more game of rounders? Quite impossible, O my fat friend! And therefore I answer the young lady somewhat grimly. 'Take care that thou also art not carried off by a wrinkled earl. Is thy heart free from all vanity? Of what nature is the heroism that thou worshippest?' 'A

nice young man!' she says, boldly, though in words somewhat different. 'If so it will be well for thee; but did I not see thine eyes hankering the other day after the precious stones of Ophir, and thy mouth watering for the flesh-pots of Egypt? Was I not watching thee as thou sattest at that counter, so frightfully intent? Beware!' 'The grumpy old fellow with the bald head!' she said shortly afterwards to her bosom friend, not careful that her words should be duly inaudible.

Some idea that all was not yet over with her had come upon her poor heart,—upon Lady Desmond's heart, soon after Owen Fitzgerald had made himself familiar in her old mansion. We have read how that idea was banished, and how she had ultimately resolved that that man whom she could have loved herself should be given up to her own child when she thought that he was no longer poor and of low rank. She could not sympathize with her daughter, —love with her love, and rejoice with her joy; but she could do her duty by her, and according to her lights she endeavoured so to do.

But now again all was turned and changed and altered. Owen of Hap House was once more Owen of Hap House only, but still in her eyes heroic, as it behoved a man to be. He would not creep about the country with moaning voice and melancholy eyes, with draggled dress and outward signs of wretchedness. He might be wretched, but

he would still be manly. Could it be possible that to her should yet be given the privilege of soothing that noble, unbending wretchedness? By no means possible, poor, heart-laden countess; thy years are all against thee. Girls whose mouths will water unduly for the flesh-pots of Egypt must in after life undergo such penalties as these. Art thou not a countess?

But not so did she answer herself. Might it not be possible? Ah, might it not be possible? And as the question was even then being asked, perhaps for the ten thousandth time, Owen Fitzgerald stood before her. She had not yet seen him since the new news had gone abroad, and had hardly yet conceived how it might be possible that she should do so. But now as she thought of him there he was. They two were together,—alone together; and the door by which he had entered had closed upon him before she was aware of his presence.

'Owen Fitzgerald!' she said, starting up and giving him both her hands. This she did, not of judgment, nor yet from passion, but of impulse. She had been thinking of him with such kindly thoughts, and now he was there it became natural that her greeting should be kindly. It was more so than it had ever been to any but her son since the wrinkled, gloating earl had come and fetched her.

'Yes, Owen Fitzgerald,' said he, taking the two

hands that were offered to him, and holding them awhile; not pressing them as a man who loved her, who could have loved her, would have done. 'After all that has gone and passed between us, Lady Desmond, I cannot leave the country without saying one word of farewell to you.'

'Leave the country!' she exclaimed. 'And where are you going?'

As she looked into his face with her hands still in his,—for she did not on the moment withdraw them, she felt that he had never before looked so noble, so handsome, so grand. Leave the country! ah, yes; and why should not she leave it also? What was there to bind her to those odious walls in which she had been immolated during the best half of her life?

'Where are you going?' she asked, looking almost wildly up at him.

'Somewhere very far a-field, Lady Desmond,' he said; and then the hands dropped from him. 'You will understand at any rate that Hap House will not be a fitting residence for me.'

'I hate the whole country,' said she, 'the whole place hereabouts. I have never been happy here. Happy! I have never been other than unhappy. I have been wretched. What would I not give to leave it also?'

'To you it cannot be intolerable as it will be to me. You have known so thoroughly where all

my hopes were garnered, that I need not tell you why I must go from Hap House. I think that I have been wronged, but I do not desire that others should think so. And as for you and me, Lady Desmond, though we have been enemies, we have been friends also.'

'Enemies!' said she, 'I hope not.' And she spoke so softly, so unlike her usual self, in the tones so suited to a loving, clinging woman, that though he did not understand it, he was startled at her tenderness. 'I have never felt that you were my enemy, Mr. Fitzgerald; and certainly I never was an enemy to you.'

'Well; we were opposed to each other. I thought that you were robbing me of all I valued in life; and you, you thought—'

'I thought that Clara's happiness demanded rank and wealth and position. There; I tell you my sins fairly. You may say that I was mercenary if you will,—mercenary for her. I thought that I knew what would be needful for her. Can you be angry with a mother for that?'

'She had given me a promise! But never mind. It is all over now. I did not come to upbraid you, but to tell you that I now know how it must be, and that I am going.'

'Had you won her, Owen,' said the countess, looking intently into his face, 'had you won her, she would not have made you happy.'

'As to that it was for me to judge—for me and her. I thought it would, and was willing to peril all in the trial. And so was she—willing at one time. But never mind; it is useless to talk of that.'

'Quite useless now.'

'I did think—when it was as they said in my power to give him back his own,—I did think;—but no, it would have been mean to look for payment. It is all over, and I will say nothing further; not a word. I am not a girl to harp on such a thing day after day, and to grow sick with love. I shall be better away. And therefore I am going, and I have now come to say good-bye, because we were friends in old days, Lady Desmond.'

Friends in old days! They were old days to him, but they were no more than the other day to her. It was as yet hardly more than two years since she had first known him, and yet he looked on the acquaintance as one that had run out its time and required to be ended. She would so fain have been able to think that the beginning only had as yet come to them. But there he was, anxious to bid her adieu, and what was she to say to him?

'Yes, we were friends. You have been my only friend here I think. You will hardly believe with how much true friendship I have thought of you when the feud between us—if it was a feud—was at the strongest. Owen Fitzgerald, I have loved you through it all.'

Loved him? She was so handsome as she spoke, so womanly, so graceful, there was still about her so much of the charm of beauty, that he could hardly take the word when coming from her mouth as applicable to ordinary friendship. And yet he did so take it. They had all loved each other—as friends should love—and now that he was going she had chosen to say as much. He felt the blood tingle his cheek at the sound of her words; but he was not vain enough to take it in its usual sense. 'Then we will part as friends,' said he—tamely enough.

'Yes, we will part,' she said. And as she spoke the blood mantled deep on her neck and cheek and forehead, and a spirit came out of her eye, such as never had shone there before in his presence. 'Yes, we will part,' and she took up his right hand, and held it closely, pressed between both her own. 'And as we must part I will tell you all. Owen Fitzgerald, I have loved you with all my heart,—with all the love that a woman has to give. I have loved you, and have never loved any other. Stop, stop,' for he was going to interrupt her. 'You shall hear me now to the last,—and for the last time. I have loved you with such love—such love as you perhaps felt for her, but as she will never feel. But you shall not say, nay you shall not think that I have been selfish. I would have kept you from her when you were poor as

you are now,—not because I loved you. No; you will never think that of me. And when I thought that you were rich, and the head of your family, I did all that I could to bring her back for you. Did I not, Owen?'

'Yes, I think you did,' he muttered between his teeth, hardly knowing how to speak.

'Indeed, indeed I did so. Others may say that I was selfish for my child, but you shall not think that I was selfish for myself. I sent for Patrick, and bade him go to you. I strove as mothers do strive for their children. I taught myself,—I strove to teach myself to forget that I had loved you. I swore on my knees that I would love you only as my son,—as my dear, dear son. Nay, Owen, I did; on my knees before my God.'

He turned away from her to rub the tears from his eyes, and in doing so he dragged his hand away from her. But she followed him, and again took it. 'You will hear me to the end now,' she said; 'will you not? you will not begrudge me that? And then came these other tidings, and all that scheme was dashed to the ground. It was better so, Owen; you would not have been happy with the property—'

'I should never have taken it.'

'And she, she would have clung closer to him as a poor man than ever she had done when he was . She is her mother's daughter there. And

then—then— But I need not tell you more. You will know it all now. If you had become rich, I would have ceased to love you; but I shall never cease now that you are again poor,—now that you are Owen of Hap House again, as you sent us word yourself that day.'

And then she ceased, and bending down her head bathed his hand with her tears. Had any one asked him that morning, he would have said that it was impossible that the Countess of Desmond should weep. And now the tears were streaming from her eyes as though she were a broken-hearted girl. And so she was. Her girlhood had been postponed and marred,—not destroyed and made away with, by the wrinkled earl with the gloating eyes.

She had said all now, and she stood there, still holding his hand in hers, but with her head turned from him. It was his turn to speak now, and how was he to answer her. I know how most men would have answered;—by the pressure of an arm, by a warm kiss, by a promise of love, and by a feeling that such love was possible. And then most men would have gone home, leaving the woman triumphant, and have repented bitterly as they sat moody over their own fires, with their wine-bottles before them. But it was not so with Owen Fitzgerald. His heart was to him a reality. He had loved with all his power and strength, with all the

vigour of his soul,—having chosen to love. But he would not now be enticed by pity into a bastard feeling, which would die away when the tenderness of the moment was no longer present to his eye and touch. His love for Clara had been such that he could not even say that he loved another.

'Dear Lady Desmond,' he began.

'Ah, Owen; we are to part now, part for ever,' she said; 'speak to me once in your life as though we were equal friends. Cannot you forget for one minute that I am Countess of Desmond?'

Mary, Countess of Desmond; such was her name and title. But so little familiar had he been with the name by which he had never heard her called, that in his confusion he could not remember it. And had he done so, he could not have brought himself to use it. 'Yes,' he said; 'we must part. It is impossible for me to remain here.'

'Doubly impossible now,' she replied, half reproaching him.

'Yes; doubly impossible now. Is it not better that the truth should be spoken?'

'Oh, yes. I have spoken it—too plainly.'

'And so will I speak it plainly. We cannot control our own hearts, Lady Desmond. It is, as you say, doubly impossible now. All the love I have had to give she has had,—and has. Such being so, why should I stay here? or could you wish that I should do so?'

'I do not wish it.' That was true enough. The wish would have been to wander away with him.

'I must go, and shall start at once. My very things are packed for my going. I will not be here to have the sound of their marriage bells jangling in my ears. I will not be pointed at as the man who has been duped on every side.'

'Ah me, that I was a man too,—that I could go away and make for myself a life!'

'You have Desmond with you.'

'No, no. He will go too; of course he will go. He will go, and I shall be utterly alone. What a fool I am,—what an ass, that by this time I have not learned to bear it!'

'They will always be near you at Castle Richmond.'

'Ah, Owen, how little you understand! Have we been friends while we lived under the same roof? And now that she is there, do you think that she will heed me? I tell you that you do not know her. She is excellent, good, devoted; but cold as ice. She will live among the poor, and grace his table; and he will have all that he wants. In twelve months, Owen, she would have turned your heart to a stone.'

'It is that already I think,' said he. 'At any rate, it will be so to all others. Good-bye, Lady Desmond.'

'Good-bye, Owen; and God bless you. My secret will be safe with you.'

'Safe! yes, it will be safe.' And then, as she put her cheek up to him, he kissed it and left her.

He had been very stern. She had laid bare to him her whole heart, and he had answered her love by never a word. He had made no reply in any shape,—given her no thanks for her heart's treasure. He had responded to her affection by no tenderness. He had not even said that this might have been so, had that other not have come to pass. By no word had he alluded to her confession,—but had regarded her delusion as monstrous, a thing of which no word was to be spoken.

So at least said the countess to herself, sitting there all alone where he had left her. 'He regards me as old and worn. In his eyes I am wrinkled and ugly.' 'Twas thus that her thoughts expressed themselves; and then she walked across the room towards the mirror, but when there she could not look in it: she turned her back upon it without a glance, and returned to her seat by the window. What mattered it now? It was her doom to live there alone for the term of life with which it might still please God to afflict her.

And then looking out from the window her eyes fell upon Owen as he rode slowly down across the park. His horse was walking very slowly, and it seemed as though he himself were unconscious of

the pace. As long as he remained in sight she did not take her eyes from his figure, gazing at him painfully as he grew dimmer and more dim in the distance. Then at last he turned behind the bushes near the lodge, and she felt that she was all alone. It was the last that she ever saw of Owen Fitzgerald.

Unfortunate girl, marred in thy childhood by that wrinkled earl with the gloating eyes; or marred rather by thine own vanity! Those flesh-pots of Egypt! Are they not always thus bitter in the eating?

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

AND now my story is told; and were it not for the fashion of the thing, this last short chapter might be spared. It shall at any rate be very short.

Were it not that I eschew the fashion of double names for a book, thinking that no amount of ingenuity in this respect will make a bad book pass muster, whereas a good book will turn out as such though no such ingenuity be displayed, I might have called this 'A Tale of the Famine Year in Ireland.' At the period of the year to which the story has brought us—and at which it will leave us—the famine was at its very worst. People were beginning to believe that there would never be a bit more to eat in the land, and that the time for hope and energy was gone. Land was becoming of no value, and the only thing regarded was a sufficiency of food to keep body and soul together. Under such circumstances it was difficult to hope.

But energy without hope is impossible, and therefore was there such an apathy and deadness through the country. It was not that they did not work who were most concerned to work. The amount of conscientious work then done was most praiseworthy. But it was done almost without hope of success, and done chiefly as a matter of conscience. There was a feeling, which was not often expressed but which seemed to prevail everywhere, that ginger would not again be hot in the mouth, and that in very truth the time for cakes and ale in this world was all over. It was this feeling that made a residence in Ireland at that period so very sad.

Ah me! how little do we know what is coming to us! Irish cakes and ale were done and over for this world, we all thought. But in truth the Irish cakes were only then a-baking, and the Irish ale was being brewed. I am not sure that these good things are yet quite fit for the palates of the guest; —not as fit as a little more time will make them. The cake is still too new,—cakes often are; and the ale is not sufficiently mellowed. But of this I am sure, that the cakes and ale are there;—and the ginger, too, very hot in the mouth. Let a committee of Irish landlords say how the rents are paid now, and what amount of arrears was due through the country when the famine came among them. Rents paid to the day: that is the ginger

hot in the mouth which best pleases the palate of a country gentleman.

But if one did in truth write a tale of the famine, after that it would behove the author to write a tale of the pestilence; and then another, a tale of the exodus. These three wonderful events, following each other, were the blessings coming from Omniscience and Omnipotence by which the black clouds were driven from the Irish firmament. If one, through it all could have dared to hope, and have had from the first that wisdom which has learned to acknowledge that His mercy endureth for ever! And then the same author going on with his series would give in his last set,—Ireland in her prosperity.

Of all those who did true good conscientious work at this time, none exceeded in energy our friend Herbert Fitzgerald after his return to Castle Richmond. It seemed to him as though some thank-offering were due from him for all the good things that Providence had showered upon him, and the best thank-offering that he could give was a devoted attention to the interest of the poor around him. Mr. Somers soon resigned to him the chair at those committee meetings at Berryhill and Gortnaclough, and it was acknowledged that the Castle Richmond arrangements for soup-kitchens, out-door relief, and labour-gangs, might be taken as a model for the south of Ireland. Few other men were able to go to the work with means so ample and

with hands so perfectly free. Mr. Carter even, who by this time had become cemented in a warm trilateral friendship with Father Barney and the Rev. Æneas Townsend, was obliged to own that many a young English country gentleman might take a lesson from Sir Herbert Fitzgerald in the duties peculiar to his position.

His marriage did not take place till full six months after the period to which our story as brought us. Baronets with twelve thousand a year cannot be married off the hooks, as may be done with ordinary mortals. Settlements of a grandiose nature were required, and were duly concocted. Perhaps Mr. Die had something to say to them, so that the great maxim of the law was brought into play. Perhaps also, though of this Herbert heard no word, it was thought inexpedient to hurry matters while any further inquiry was possible in that affair of the Mollett connection. Mr. Die and Mr. Prendergast were certainly going about, still drawing all coverts far and near, lest their fox might not have been fairly run to his last earth. But, as I have said, no tidings as to this reached Castle Richmond. There, in Ireland, no man troubled himself further with any doubt upon the subject; and Sir Herbert took his title and received his rents, by the hands of Mr. Somers, exactly as though the Molletts, father and son, had never appeared in those parts.

It was six months before the marriage was celebrated, but during a considerable part of that time Clara remained a visitor at Castle Richmond. To Lady Fitzgerald she was now the same as a daughter, and to Aunt Letty the same as a niece. By the girls she had for months been regarded as a sister. So she remained in the house of which she was to be the mistress, learning to know their ways, and ingratiating herself with those who were to be dependent on her.

'But I had rather stay with you, mamma, if you will allow me,' Clara had said to her mother when the countess was making some arrangement with her that she should return to Castle Richmond. 'I shall be leaving you altogether so soon now!' And she got up close to her mother's side caressingly, and would fain have pressed into her arms and kissed her, and have talked to her of what was coming, as a daughter loves to talk to a loving mother. But Lady Desmond's heart was sore and sad and harsh, and she preferred to be alone.

'You will be better at Castle Richmond, my dear: you will be much happier there, of course. There can be no reason why you should come again into the gloom of this prison.'

'But I should be with you, dearest mamma.'

'It is better that you should be with the Fitzgeralds now; and as for me—I must learn to live Indeed I have learned it, so you need not

mind for me.' Clara was rebuffed by the tone rather than the words, but she still looked up into her mother's face wistfully. 'Go, my dear,' said the countess—'I would sooner be alone at present.' And so Clara went. It was hard upon her that even now her mother would not accept her love.

But Lady Desmond could not be cordial with her daughter. She made more than one struggle to do so, but always failed. She could,—she thought that she could, have watched her child's happiness with contentment had Clara married Owen Fitzgerald—Sir Owen, as he would then have been. But now she could only remember that Owen was lost to them both, lost through her child's fault. She did not hate Clara: nay, she would have made any sacrifice for her daughter's welfare; but she could not take her lovingly to her bosom. So she shut herself up alone, in her prison as she called it, and then looked back upon the errors of her life. It was as well for her to look back as to look forward, for what joy was there for which she could dare to hope?

In the days that were coming, however, she did relax something of her sternness. Clara was of course married from Desmond Court, and the very necessity of making some preparations for this festivity was in itself salutary. But indeed it could hardly be called a festivity,—it was so quiet and sombre. Clara had but two bridesmaids,

and they were Mary and Emmeline Fitzgerald. The young earl gave away his sister, and Aunt Letty was there, and Mr. Prendergast, who had come over about the settlements; Mr. Somers also attended, and the ceremony was performed by our old friend Mr. Townsend. Beyond these there were no guests at the wedding of Sir Herbert Fitzgerald.

The young earl was there, and at the last the wedding had been postponed a week for his coming. He had left Eton at Midsummer in order that he might travel for a couple of years with Owen Fitzgerald before he went to Oxford. It had been the lad's own request, and had been for a while refused by Owen. But Fitzgerald had at last given way to the earl's love, and they had started together for Norway.

'They want me to be home,' he had said one morning to his friend.

'Ah, yes; I suppose so.'

'Do you know why?' They had never spoken a word about Clara since they had left England together, and the earl now dreaded to mention her name.

'Know why!' replied Owen; 'of course I do. It is to give away your sister. Go home, Desmond, my boy; when you have returned we will talk about her. I shall bear it better when I know that she is his wife.'

And so it was with them. For two years Lord Desmond travelled with him, and after that Owen Fitzgerald went on upon his wanderings alone. Many a long year has run by since that, and yet he has never come back to Hap House. Men of the county Cork now talk of him as one whom they knew long since. He who took his house as a stranger is a stranger no longer in the country, and the place that Owen left vacant has been filled.. The hounds of Duhallow would not recognize his voice, nor would the steed in the stable follow gently at his heels. But there is yet one left who thinks of him, hoping that she may yet see him before she dies.

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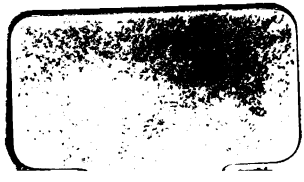
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